鎌池和馬

イラスト／灰村キヨタカ

とある魔術の禁書目録（インデックス）7

電撃文庫

Toaru Majutsu no Index - Volume 7

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Toaru Majutsu no Index 7

The grimoire "Book Of the Law" that was written by the legendary magician contained the said magic of being able to summon angels, and it was carried away with the nun who knows how to interpret these texts.

At Academy City, Kamijou Touma, who passed his time by doing nothing, felt that this is most likely another unrelated occurence. But even in that "misfortune", without knowing why, made up his mind to join that rescue mission...

And yet, the criminals who took away the above mentioned book are of the "Amakusa Catholic Church", the religious denomination where Kanzaki Kaori was said to have worked at as a priestess...!

The "English Anglicans" Index belongs to, the "Roman Catholic Church" who's the client this time, and the "Amakusa Catholics" which Kanzaki Kaori was formerly the leader of.

When the 3 magical organizations cross paths with Kamijou Touma, the story shall begin...!

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Kamachi Kazuma

While in the middle of relaxing, we have reached book number 7. With regards to what seems like a list of books that is found under these comments too, it does indeed seem that it's trying to reduce the amount of blank space here. This is the slightly earnest Kamachi signing off.

(Products of Dengeki Bunko)

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Illustrator: Haimura Kiyotaka

Born in 1973. Here, for many months repeatedly, I've been drawing pictures of 'work → sleep' /Waking up and having no choice, I have to do one thing that has to be done at ease. But, speaking about being at ease... I wish for some free time.

カバー／口絵 前

とある魔術の
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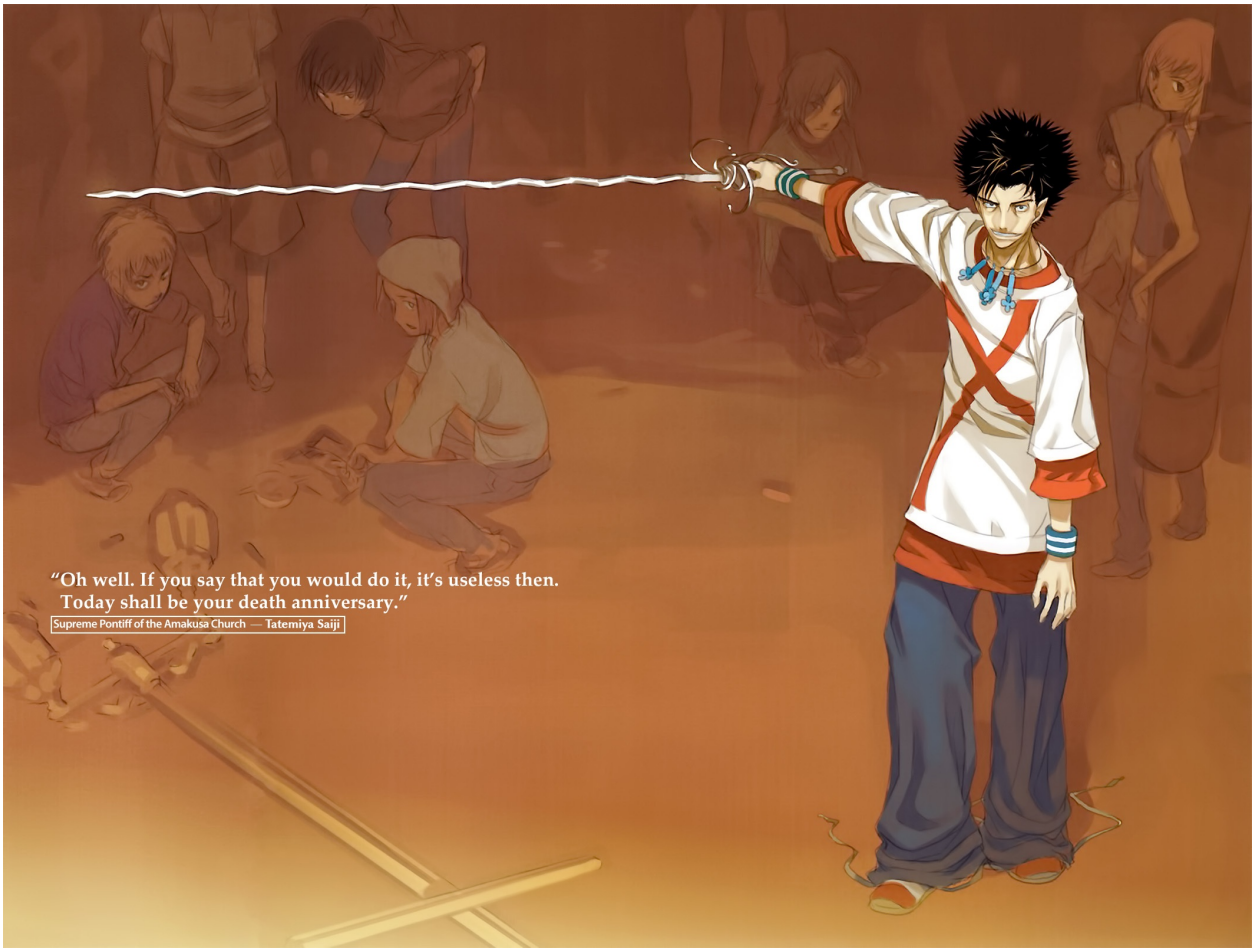
7
鎌池和馬
イラスト／灰村キヨタカ

"Hey!! Are you completely ignoring all my explanations with a smile!?"
High school student of Academy City — Kamijou Touma
?
"No, I never intended that at all."
Roman Catholic Church nun — Orsola Aquinas

"Despicable coward."
Nun and keeper of the Index of Prohibited Books — Index
"Not only would I not have any replies for that, but I also do not see that it's necessary to do so."
Magician of the Anglican Church's "Necessarius" — Stiyl Magnus

“Mugya—...Papaa...”
Roman Catholic Church nun — Agnese Sanctis

"Stop it...
Kanzaki Kaori, you will never be able to beat me."
Kamijou Touma's neighbour — Tsuchimikado Motoharu
"You came here to stop me?"
Magician of the Anglican Church's "Necessarius" — Kanzaki Kaori


“Oh well. If you say that you would do it, it’s useless then.
Today shall be your death anniversary.”
Supreme Pontiff of the Amakusa Church — Tatemiya Saiji

"Pooh. Various interesting things happened, various they are."

Anglican Church archbishop — **Laura Stuart**

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Prologue: Begin Action. *The_Page_is_Opened.*

St. George Cathedral.

Although it was called a cathedral, it was but one of the many churches in the heart of London. Even though it was not considered small, there was a world of difference when it was compared to Westminster Abbey or St. Paul’s Cathedral. Of course, it could not be compared to the Cathedral of Canterbury, the origin of Anglicanism in Britain, either.

In fact, the number of buildings in London that bore the name "St. George" was great. Besides the church, there were also department stores, restaurants, clothing shops, and schools. There could be several of those buildings downtown. Not only that, but there could also be more than ten churches named "St. George Cathedral". The relationship between "St. George" and Britons could be seen even from the Union Jack.

This St. George Cathedral was the former base of Necessarius.

That was no glamorous distinction, however. The duty of Necessarius was to eliminate all sorts of magic associations in Britain and any magicians associated with them. In order to achieve that objective, Necessarius had to use magic, which was regarded by its members as filthy. Because of that, they had been viewed rather poorly by the Purists, and had even been chased out of Canterbury, the headquarters of the Anglican Church, into this "St. George Cathedral".

But afterward, there had been some unexpected changes.

Originally considered a peripheral organization, Necessarius was making numerous contributions behind the scenes.

These actions had allowed Necessarius to build its profile and power within the Anglican Church. Today, although it looked like the Anglican Church was run by the Cathedral of Canterbury, the actual decision-making power had, in fact,

been transferred to St. George Cathedral.

Thus, this cathedral, located slightly away from the center of London, was now the nucleus of the large Anglican Church.

A red-haired priest, Stiyl Magnus, walked down the streets of London in the early morning, feeling extremely puzzled.

There was nothing strange about the street itself. Stone apartments more than 300 years old lay on both sides of the street. Office workers, with cell phones in their hands, rushed down the old street. An old double-decker bus moved slowly forward, and workers on the street were busy dismantling a similarly old phone booth. An integration of new and old history...there was nothing unusual happening.

Nothing was wrong with the weather, either. There were no clouds in the sky this morning, but the weather changed every four hours or so; thus, there were many people carrying their umbrellas around. It was a hot day, and as London was known for its foggy weather, this aspect of summer--the ever-changing weather--was something that could not be taken lightly. The increasing moisture caused by the intermittent rainfall, together with the foehn and summer heat wave, resulted in amazingly high temperatures, so these rather enjoyable-looking tourist attractions had their own shortcomings as well. As for someone like Stiyl, who had already considered the shortcomings when he first chose to stay in this city, he did not mind it.

What made Stiyl insecure was the girl beside him.

"**Archbishop**..."

"Hmm? I purposely deigned to wear such simple attire today; please refrain from addressing me by that lofty title."

Dressed in a beige robe, the girl, who looked eighteen, spoke calmly in Japanese. In truth, according to regulations, a clergyman’s attire could only have white, red, black, green, or purple, with threads of gold for decoration, so this girl was secretly breaking the rules.

Unfortunately, it seemed she believed that, as long as she put those clothes on, she would not be noticed in the crowd. Yet, because of her crystal-white skin,

clear blue eyes, and shining golden hair--one would not be surprised if she were sold in a gem shop--no matter the circumstances, she stood out completely from the surrounding crowd.

Her hair was shockingly long; it extended all the way to her ankles, then folded up and went behind her head, through the large silver hairpin that was holding it in place, and down again to her waist. In other words, its length was almost two and a half times her height.

The world-famous din droned on in Lambeth, London, this morning, but around her, the voices felt like they had been suppressed, as if the people were in a solemn church where noise was not tolerated.

This was the Archbishop of the 0th Parish of the Anglican Church, Necessarius.

Laura Stuart.

The king was the highest-ranking leader of the Anglican Church. Archbishop Laura was considered the courier of the king, and her responsibility was to take over for the busy king and control the Anglican Church.

The Anglican Church was like an age-old string instrument.

Besides the "owner", there was also the "caretaker". Take a violin, for example; no matter how good a violin was, if it was not used for a while, the strings would relax and the sound post would become decrepit, making it sound unpleasant. Laura's job was to perform in place of the owner so that the violin could be maintained in a perfect state.

But, like the situation between the Cathedral of Canterbury and St. George Cathedral, the name and actual power had now been reversed. The real power now lay with Laura.

The Archbishop, who had such a large amount of power, now freely walked the streets in the early morning without even a single bodyguard near her.

Stiyl and Laura were now headed toward St. George Cathedral. At first, Laura had suggested that Stiyl meet her at the cathedral at this time. She was supposed to have waited at the cathedral, and Stiyl was supposed to have gone there.

"I possess my own residence, and I am not always bound to that old church all year long." Laura continued onward, not making any noise. "Is it not enjoyable to traverse and converse?"

Around them, the office workers were hurrying around. Since this place was close to Waterloo Station, the largest station in London, it was not unusual to them for a nun or priest to be here. The number of churches in London was equal to the number of parks, after all, even though the number could not be compared to that of Rome.

"Anyway, I'm okay with it. But didn't you call me to the cathedral because you wanted to talk about something that outsiders aren't supposed to hear?"

"Such a narrow-minded man; why brood too much about these minor things? Can you not appreciate this time with me? Even though a Father who hears a woman’s repentance gains a feeling of 'relief', why does he not open his heart?"

"..." Stiyl frowned and asked, "Can I ask a question?"

"Do you have to be so cautious? Fire away."

"Why does your Japanese sound so stupid?"[1]

"...?"

The Archbishop of the Anglican Church looked like someone who had been told that her shirt was buttoned wrong. She initially froze, and then her movements stopped completely. She then blushed while saying,

"Ah...eh...? Is...is it aberrant? Is 'Japanese' not supposed to sound like this?"

"Pardon me, but I don't really understand what you’re trying to say. You’re trying to speak the ancient language, but it just doesn’t feel right."

The people around them, clad in Western clothing, were probably unable to understand Japanese, but Laura felt that the commotion around her had now become laughter.

"Ah...ehm...I learned my Japanese from many sources, such as literature and television programs. I even asked a real Japanese person for aid before..."

"Eh, may I know who that 'real Japanese person' was?"

"Uh...that guy named Tsuchimikado Motoharu..."

"Please don’t consider that dangerous guy, who lustfully lets his own stepsister wear a maid uniform, an ideal Japanese person. Asia is not that fascinating, you know."

"To...to believe there was such a thing...I must quickly amend my Japanese...oh, no!"

"What’s wrong?"

"It is...it is difficult to alter something that I am so accustomed to!"

"...don’t tell me you used such a stupid way of speaking to negotiate with the representatives from Academy City."

Laura’s shoulders jumped as she said, "Do not...do not worry, do not worry...no problem, no problem..."

Her voice trembled, however, as sweat appeared on her face, her eyes swimming around.

Stiyl sighed, his breath full of cigarette smoke.

"Anyway, let's talk when we reach the cathedral."

The two rounded the corner. Kanzaki Kaori secretly frequented the Japanese restaurant located there.

"Do...do we really have to talk about this!? I cannot possibly communicate with my Japanese!"

"Enough; let’s talk about the 'proper business', and not about this trivial stuff. If you aren’t confident in your Japanese, we can still talk using English."

"Ri—ridiculous! Who said that I was not confident!? It is...it is just that...my physical condition today is rather hindering!"

Laura said, at a loss.

"And regarding the proper business...before we start..."

From under the robe over her chest, Laura pulled out something that looked like two pieces of notebook paper, as well as a black magic marker. As one who specialized in using runes, Stiyl immediately knew what she was going to use it for.

"Chiu chiu chiu~"

Laura tried to imitate the strange sound made by the magic marker as she drew on the paper. During several important ceremonies, when Archbishop Laura

stood in front of the crowd, she looked too noble to even be mortal--but now, the Archbishop was like a girl randomly doodling on her notebook in the middle of a lesson.

If possible, I wish she could maintain that noble image.

Stiyl thought, dangling his cigarette and frowning. He really did not like that sound.

“Chiu chiu chiu

"Eh? Wait...wait a minute, Stiyl! I’m now speaking in English!"

Although she was not making any sound, Laura looked panicked, scaring the cat sprawling in front of the not-yet-open restaurant. Stiyl sighed. The authority and magnanimity that an Archbishop should have were now all gone.

"Then there might be an error when the message is exchanged. Although it’s weird, it doesn’t affect our conversation. Let’s get down to proper business."

"Ah...uu...ahem ahem, okay, let’s start."

It seemed like Laura wanted to say something more, but she swallowed it and went to the main issue.

"Stiyl, have you heard of **The Book of the Law**?"

"It’s the name of a grimoire. If I remember correctly, the author is Edward Alexander."

Edward Alexander--also known as Crowley.

Some said that he was the most decorated magician of the 20th century, and some said that he was the worst magician of the 20th century. As his actions and demeanor exceeded everyone’s imaginations and common sense, he had been chased out of several countries. He had managed to provoke the creative desire of several artists, but had also managed to increase the hostility towards him from all magicians. A truly legendary man. According to history, he died on December 1st, 1947. Some even felt that the world had been relieved when he had died. All of this showed the number of controversies and problems that he had caused.

When such a powerful magician died, there would naturally be people who would declare themselves his disciples or heirs. Up until today, the magic system that they had created continued to cause headaches for the organization that was still specifically targeting Crowley--and as was the case with other legends, the rumors that he was still alive continued to roam about.

"If I remember correctly, however, isn't the original Book of the Law still being kept inside the library of the Vatican in Rome?"

In order to allow the girl called Index to memorize the 103,000 grimoires, Stiyl had accompanied her around the world to protect her. Although he had not seen the contents, Stiyl was still able to remember where the one hundred most famous texts were. "You're right. From 1920 to 1932, Crowley carried out his activities on the island of Sicily, in Italy. It is believed that The Book of the Law first appeared then." Laura spoke as if she was reciting what she had memorized from a history textbook. "Stiyl, do you know what makes this book special?"

"..."

The characteristics of the book.

"If we first ignore the reliability of this work, there are several legends about it. Some believe that Crowley summoned the guardian angel Aiwass, learned the 'Angelic Technique' that no human is able to use, and recorded it in The Book of the Law. Some believe that when The Book of the Law is opened, the Christian age will end, and humanity will proceed to a brand new age... In the former sense, an angel who doesn’t think is unable to teach humanity anything, but we’re rather concerned with the latter’s views. However..."

According to the Anglican Church, it was assumed to be a grimoire containing many powerful spells.

But on hearing that, one would wonder: why was it an "assumption"?

Index should have memorized The Book of the Law already. So the reason was...

"I believe you know that nobody can understand that book? Although all grimoires are written in codes, this book is still an exception. Even Index has given up on reading it, and Sherry Cromwell, who specialises in interpreting these codes, has failed to do so."

That was right; no one was able to interpret The Book of the Law. According to what Index had said, based on our current limited knowledge, nobody could interpret it; thus, she could only memorize all the undeciphered codes of The Book of the Law.

At that moment, Laura smiled happily, saying, "Then, if someone who can decipher The Book of the Law were to appear, what do you think the consequences would be?"

"What are you talking about...!?"

Stunned, Stiyl stared at Laura. She did not look like she was joking.

"There is a Roman Catholic nun by the name of Orsola Aquinas. She only knows how to decipher it, however; she has yet to read its contents."

"What's going on?"

"Orsola seems to have found a way to decode it by reading the incomplete copies. Right now, she only has the index page, the preface, and several other pages."

The original copy of The Book of the Law was now being kept under strict security, so ordinary people should not be able to get their hands on it easily. Except for people like Index, it was dangerous for anyone else to read the original.

“Right now... the Roman Catholic Church is lacking in manpower due to a power struggle. They might try to use The Book of the Law to regain a foothold. Those people probably view it as a blueprint of some new weapon..."

According to reports, the three thousand people who formed the Gregorian Chant had been defeated by an alchemist, and although the Roman Catholic Church was still the largest Christian sect in the world, their power had weakened. In order to protect their place at the pinnacle of the Christian sects, it was possible that they would use the knowledge in The Book of the Law to design something to replace the Gregorian Chant and so cover the loss in their fighting power. That would not be surprising.

"No, they will not use The Book of the Law to build up their fighting capability. At least in the short term, the Roman Catholic Church will not attack anyone for The Book of the Law. You do not have to worry about that."

"Why?"

"Hoho, it is a secret! I am not leaking it out."

Seeing Laura speak with such confidence, Stiyl could not help but frown and think of the possibilities. Had the Anglican Church signed an agreement with the

Roman Catholic Church, thereby banning the use of The Book of the Law?

...If so, why would the Roman Catholic Church use Orsola to decode The Book of the Law?

"Looking at your expression, it seems like you are still not reassured. Really, did I not tell you not to worry?"

"But then..."

"Okay, okay, stop nagging. Even if the Roman Catholic Church wanted to use The Book of the Law for whatever purpose, they could not do it now."

Before Stiyl could even ask why, Laura continued on.

"Because The Book of the Law has been stolen by Orsola Aquinas."

"What did you say...by whom!?"

Stiyl could not help but shout. The office workers around them, who had been heading toward the train station, turned around to look at him.

"The work I want you to do after this will be your mission. The organisation that committed this criminal act should be the Amakusa Christian Church in Japan."

"Amakusa..." It was a Christian sect in Japan.

Stiyl’s colleague, Kanzaki Kaori, used to be the leader of that sect. Stiyl himself, however, did not consider it to be a Christian sect; the Amakusa Christian Church was infused with too many aspects of Shintoism and Buddhism, to the point that the basis of the Christian faith was long gone now.

"The Amakusa Christian Church is a lot smaller than the other religious factions in Rome, Britain, Russia, and other countries. The reason why it is still able to exist is Kanzaki. Now, after having lost Kanzaki, their pillar of support, it is not unthinkable of them to steal The Book of the Law in order to gain new power. After all, The Book of the Law is capable of destroying the balance of the Christian religion."

If Orsola Aquinas and The Book of the Law were to fall into the hands of the

Amakusa Church, they could use it anytime--in fact, it would be weird if they did not use it at all.

"But!" Stiyl exclaimed rudely, "Isn’t The Book of the Law hidden in the depths of the Vatican library? A small organisation like this power-hungry Amakusa Christian Church can’t possibly have the capability to get inside! I was protecting Index as I entered the Vatican library, so I’m positive that there are no blind spots down there! The only thing that can describe the security is an iron wall!"

"Actually, The Book of the Law is not inside the Vatican library."

"What?" Stiyl’s expression was blank.

A horse carriage used for sightseeing passed by Stiyl as the horse neighed, the license plate hanging behind the carriage.

"In order to organise an international exhibition, the Roman Catholic Church sent The Book of the Law to a Japanese museum. It is like the Laterano Church in Rome, where it is believed that the Son of God bled while walking up the 'Holy Path'. You know why those things are being shown to the common people, do you not?"

Every few years, the Church would showcase important historical or biblical items to the public.

The reason was simple: these were the tools to attract donations and believers. After losing their largest fighting force, the three-thousand-strong Gregorian Chant, the Roman Catholic Church must have been trying to strengthen itself through as many ways as possible, including the development of new spells and training of its members.

It was most effective to recruit these new believers in places where there were few Christians; because of that, Japan was the perfect target. But because there were few believers there, the support that the Church could give to agents in Japan was much less. It seemed like the Amakusas had timed this well.

"That's stupid...bringing out such a dangerous thing to show it to the world, and even losing it in the process--the Roman Catholic Church has really disgraced us Christians."

"Hoho, I believe the Roman Catholics have a deeper understanding of that than us. Even if they had a geographical advantage, for an item of the Roman Catholic Church to be stolen by a small sect in the Far East, I guess it means that the Roman Catholic Church has been discredited."

"Haiz, does this mean that they're asking us for help?"

"No, those guys want to settle this their own way. I worked really hard to get this information. To them, that kind of secrecy may be a sort of saving grace, but I really want to scold those guys and tell them to stop dreaming."

"Hm? Does this mean that we aren't getting The Book of the Law and Orsola back for the sake of the Roman Catholic Church?"

"They are not spilling the beans, but if Orsola Aquinas can really decipher The Book of the Law, we are involved in this one way or another."

"...you're trying to do them a favor? Do you think that those 'noble clergymen' even understand the act of repaying a good deed?"

Stiyl said with disdain.

In Stiyl's impression, possibly because they had once controlled Europe entirely, the Roman Catholics--besides the believers who knew nothing about magic, of course--were rather arrogant, especially those stubborn hard-liner priests and bishops. Forget about going against them; even if one tried to help them, they would snobbishly say, "We're not so pitiful as to need to accept any assistance."

"I have no intention of helping those guys who corrupt the Church and cause it to splinter. We have a much bigger problem."

"What?"

"Kanzaki Kaori is missing."

After Laura spoke succinctly, Stiyl immediately turned around.

Kanzaki had originally been the leader of the Amakusa sect. Now, although she had already left the Amakusa, she still cared for them. Once she knew that they had caused such a problem and were now in conflict with the Roman Catholic

Church, the largest Christian sect in the world with two billion believers, how would she respond?

Kanzaki was a Saint, one of less than twenty people in the world that possessed the Stigma. The power that she had was almost equivalent to a nuclear bomb. If she left the control of the Anglican Church and directly attacked the Roman Catholic Church, what consequences would there be...?

"Knowing her, she will do anything. It would be okay if it were an ordinary person, but with her power..."

Laura sighed heavily.

"I hope that you can clean up the mess before Kanzaki does something seriously bad; that is your main priority. I do not care what you do, whether it is saving The Book of the Law or Orsola, telling the Amakusa to surrender, or forcing the Amakusa or Kanzaki to surrender."

"You’re telling me to beat Kanzaki?"

"If there is such a need."

Laura said clearly and forcefully, "Once the rest of our members are done with their missions, I will be sending them to Japan and Rome. I hope that you can do this on your own, however. Go to Academy City first."

As if spitting his doubts out, Stiyl blew the white smoke of the cigarette out of his mouth. He was not worried about having to do this alone, the magician Stiyl just was not suited to working in a team. Besides his character flaws, the flame magic he used was a huge problem; if he was not careful and used his full power, the comrades around him might end up getting swallowed by flames and smoke.

His Innocentius became stronger the more runes there were. It may be unreliable, but its power could not be belittled. The 3,000-degree-Celsius fire could move about freely. To pursue its enemies, it could even melt iron easily. To enemies, it was like a god of death. Besides that boy's right hand, there was almost no way to stop Innocentius. Using that terrifying magic, Stiyl had destroyed several magical societies on his own.

So, working alone was not a problem.

"Isn’t this a problem on the Church’s side? Why bring in the science side?"

"Index."

Laura said a person’s--no, a tool’s name.

"Since it concerns a grimoire, especially the original Book of the Law, we need all the technical knowledge we can get. I have discussed it with Academy City, so you can bring 'that' around- but there is one condition, and that is to bring the guardian along."

"..."

"What now? It’s rare to work together with 'that'; why are you so unhappy?"

"Nothing."

Stiyl seemed to have suppressed many feelings within him, as the expression on his face suddenly vanished.

"...that guardian, is it the Imagine Breaker?"

"That is right. You should be able to make use of him. Oh, do not kill him though, since he is borrowed property."

"Bringing people from Academy City into a battle between magicians, wouldn't there be a problem?"

"Regarding that, we can settle it with a few tricks. Of course, the conditions that the other party has given us are unavoidable, and I do not have the time to negotiate with them."

"I...see."

Stiyl could not understand what the leaders of Academy City were thinking, nor could he understand what Laura, who was standing right beside him, was thinking. Maybe they had carried out a few deals under the table. Anyway, these were not things that a minion like Stiyl should interfere in.

"Oh, Stiyl, bring this along."

Laura pulled out a small cross-shaped necklace from the sleeve of her simple robe and tossed it to Stiyl. Stiyl caught the symbol of belief with one hand and asked,

"A tool? Although it doesn't seem to be enhanced by any magic."

"Just a little present for Orsola Aquinas. If you meet her, immediately find the opportunity to give it to her."

Stiyl did not understand what that meant, and Laura had no intention of explaining. This was a "Don’t ask, just do as I say" scenario.

At that moment, the two stopped.

Having walked for ten minutes from the extremely large London train station, a church that did not seem to have the right to be called a "cathedral" was in front of them.

St. George Cathedral. A dark holy city filled with a terrible history of witch hunting, religious trials, and even the famous Frenchwoman Joan of Arc.

Walking in front of Stiyl, Laura grabbed the handle of the heavy door.

"Okay."

Laura pushed the two heavy doors aside and invited the priest in.

She did not use her rune card this time, instead opening her small, peach-like mouth and speaking in a clear voice,

"Regarding the details, we will talk about them inside."

Chapter 1: Academy City. *Science_Worship.*

Part 1

"So— the second semester is rather hectic. There are so many activities during this time that we can't count them all: Daihaseisai, Ichihanaransai, hiking, training, school excursions, Art Appreciation Day, Social Learning Day, Cleaning Day, end-of-term exams, tuition, and the dreaded after-class remedials! To prepare for all those festivals, everyone will be very busy."[2]

September 8th.

In the afternoon, Tsuchimikado Maika spoke casually while moving down the corridor. She was about as old as Index and maybe a bit smaller than her, but she always wore a maid uniform. What was more amazing was that she normally sat on a cylindrical cleaning machine. Whenever the cleaning machine tried to move according to its instructions, Maika would put a mop in front of it so that it could only shake about gently.

“But I’m bored now. What should I do? Touma doesn't even care about me or play with me!”

Shaking her body about and protesting at Maika, Index rattled on. Her silver hair swayed together with her white nun cap. The calico cat in her slender arms raised its front paws and swung them around, seemingly attracted to the shiny gold embroidery on her cap.

Index understood that Kamijou seemed busy recently. But in Academy City, Kamijou was the only one who talked to her.

Of course, Kamijou Touma had not confined Index to his room in the dormitory; Index had the spare key to the room, and when Kamijou was at school, Index

would spend her time walking around. (But she was powerless when it came to the automatic ticket gates; any fingerprint, pulse, or human nervous flow identifiers; or anything related to electronics, and would run away from them).

Academy City was different from any other city.

Academy City had been built soon after the development of west Tokyo, and eighty percent of its population was composed of students. When Kamijou went to school, Himegami and Komoe were also at school. So, even if Index wanted to find someone to talk to, the streets would be empty; though, after spending a week exploring, Index had found that the young lady at the clothes shop would talk to her when she was not arranging the goods. Index felt, however, that her objective was not to talk to just her.

Only Tsuchimikado Maika could be considered an exception.

In Academy City, where everyone had to act according to schedule, only she was not constrained by it. No matter if it was morning or afternoon, Index would occasionally find her on the streets. She could be found everywhere: convenience stores, department stores, parks, bakeries, station buildings, student dormitories, streets, schools...

The robot continued to try and move forward, and as Maika smacked it with her hand, she said,

"Kamijou Touma has his own things to do...you can’t give him too much trouble. Anyway, it’s not like he's intentionally left you behind. Studying is a really tiring thing."

"Uhm...I understand...but why doesn't Maika need to go to school?"

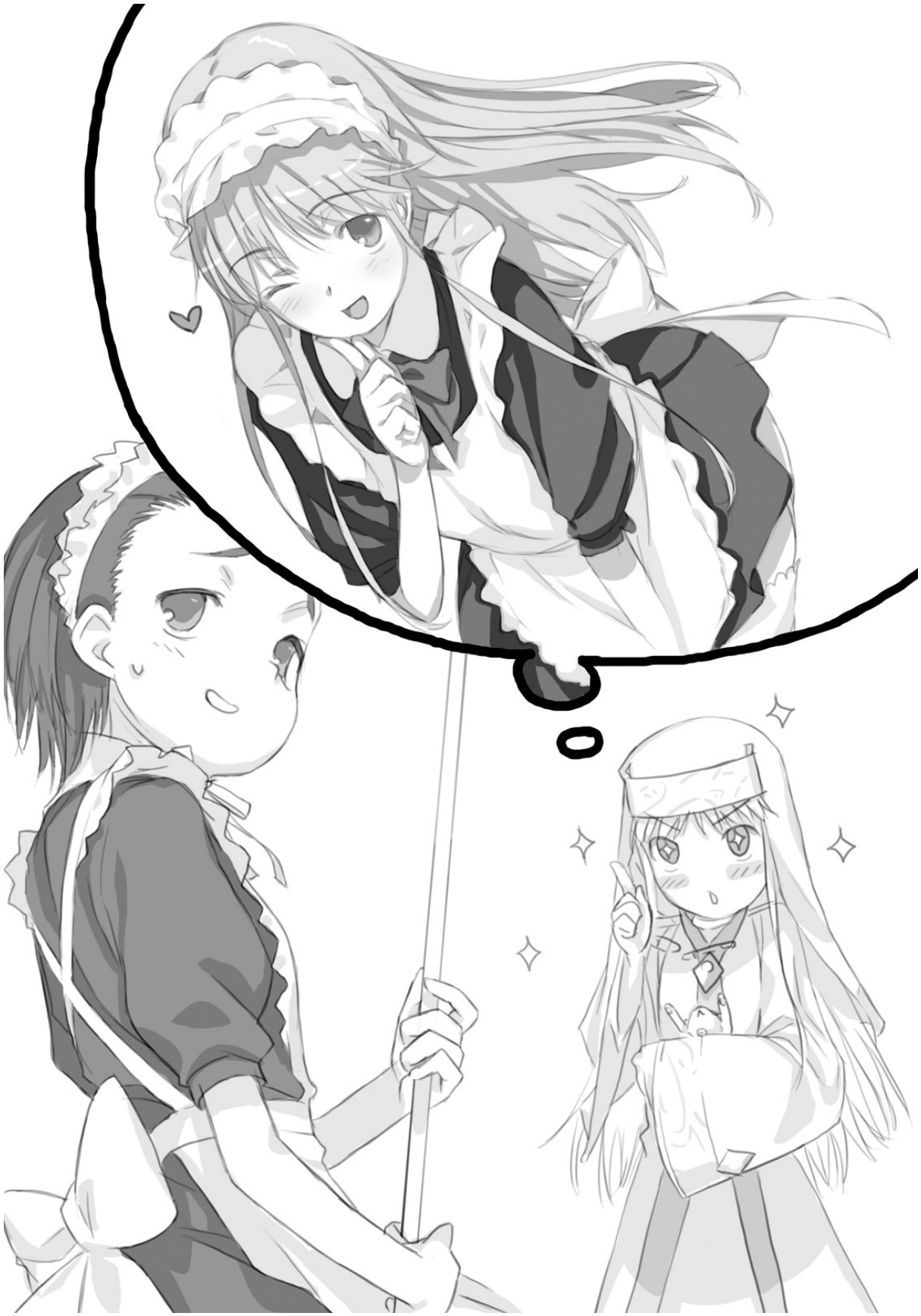
"Hoho, because I’m an exception; a maid doing practical work is a very normal thing!"

The home economics school that Tsuchimikado Maika attended was not just any weird school that still produced maids in this age. The maids from that school were specially trained to assist their masters. From cleaning up chewing gum on the streets to having a meeting with the leaders of the world, nothing could stump them. So, Maika had to go everywhere to do all sorts of practical work. Not all the school's students could go out and do such work like Maika,

however; that was a special privilege that was earned after the school had tested the student and had felt that "although she is an apprentice maid, she is capable enough to not disgrace the school’s name".

Index, who did not understand the toil and tears behind all that, tilted her cute little head and said,

"As long as I’m a maid, I can go wherever I want, anytime? Not confined by school? I would even able to go to Touma’s school?"



"No, a maid isn’t really like that—"

"Then I want to be a maid! I can then go and play with Touma!"

"Although it sounds touching, the life of a maid is really tough, especially for someone like you, who can’t do housework and waits for a boy to prepare your lunch in the morning. Being a maid would be really tough for you."

"Then let Touma be the maid! Then I can call Touma to play with me!"

"That really sounds so touching that someone could cry, but for Kamijou Touma’s sake, I advise you not to tell him that."

"Uuu—uuuu..."

The bored girl beat her cheeks, rapidly swinging her body about.

"Hm, I’m sorry; whether it’s you or him, neither of you will have the time to be maids."

A voice suddenly came from behind the pure-white girl.

"Eh?"

Index’s mind instantly went blank. Maika, who was facing Index, saw the figure behind her. Besides panic, there was a look of fear on her face.

Who was it...?

Before the nun could turn and ask, a large hand covered her mouth like tape.

Part 2

An ordinary high school student, Kamijou Touma, walked slowly down the street in the evening.

Some cylindrical cleaning machines passed by him. The windmills, which had replaced transmission towers, spun their blades like they were chasing away the crows in the city. There were many hot-air balloons floating in the orange sky, but the things hanging below them were not ordinary billboards, but the latest ultra-thin screens. Like an electronic billboard with vertical marquees, the text read from bottom to top: "Be prepared! Let’s work hard for Daihaseisai! – Judgment"

Daihaseisai was basically a sports carnival. But, as Academy City had several million students and all the schools were participating, the scale of the event was extremely large. All the students were espers, and the management committee of Academy City used the excuse of "collecting data when there was mutual interference between different powers" to encourage the students to use their powers during Daihaseisai. Thus, intensive battles between different espers could be expected. For example, during soccer or dodgeball matches, it was common to see vanishing balls, fireballs, and iceballs.

Daihaseisai lasted one week, and during that time, Academy City was open to the public; even television cameras were allowed. It was said that the viewer ratings for the esper showdowns--which could not be seen during normal sports matches--were rather high. Because of that, Judgment was putting all its effort into preparing for Daihaseisai. Also, Academy City hoped to use the few days that it was open to the public to improve its image. Of course, Academy City did not forget about terrorists, as Anti-Skill would be deployed at several important power development facilities, preventing such people from entering these secret areas.

“This… this is so tiring…”

That was what Kamijou had learned this past week.

Due to certain circumstances, Kamijou had lost his memories, and had thus forgotten everything about Daihaseisai. According to what Touma had heard, though, this activity would be extremely dangerous for him. The design of Daihaseisai was not just "no restraint of powers", but rather "if you do not use your powers, you’re going to be friends with the medical squad". In other words, even in a war horse game, there may be fireballs, lightning strikes, and flying knives.

Kamijou looked at his hand. That hand had the Imagine Breaker ability. No matter if they were magical or psychic powers, once they touched that hand, they would disappear without a trace. But a power like that was not going to help Kamijou survive in a war zone between several espers.

…Why must I be exhausted in preparing for this event that will send me to hell…?

Today, Kamijou had set up a tent in the campus set aside for visitors. Just after finishing, a female PE teacher had come with a wry smile and had said, “Sorry, we won't be using this tent.” Touma had then taken it down. When he had finally finished, a female teacher who looked like a primary school student had angrily run over and had shouted, “Ah! What are you doing, Kamijou!? Haven’t you heard the news? We still need this tent!” In any case, "Such misfortune" was not enough to describe Kamijou's life today.

After meaninglessly toiling for a long time, Kamijou finally started dragging his tired body back to the student dormitory.

“Oh, yeah, there didn’t seem to be anything left in the fridge.”

The supermarket was just in front of him, but Touma was penniless and would have to go back to his dorm to get money first. The thought of having to go out again after returning home made Kamijou extremely frustrated.

The soles of his cheap basketball shoes were rather hard, making his legs extremely tired as he walked.

When he finally approached the student dormitory, Kamijou heard a girl’s shout from above.

“Ah...Ka…Ka-ka…Kamijou Touma, Kamijou Touma!”

“Hm?”

Kamijou looked up and saw Tsuchimikado Maika sticking her head out and waving her right arm from the seventh floor. She was still sitting on top of the cleaning robot, so what she was doing seemed rather dangerous. She had grabbed a mop and had laid it on the ground, however, to prevent the robot from advancing.

“It…it’s terrible! Why did you turn off your phone!?”

“?”

Kamijou heard that and pulled his cell phone--with a GPS function--out of his pocket. Sure enough, the power was off. After turning on the cell phone, he saw several messages from Tsuchimikado Maika. Though her expression was pale, Maika slowly continued to speak. Although suspicious, Kamijou still ran to the elevator.

Kamijou arrived at his room on the seventh floor. Maika removed the mop and the cleaning robot slowly moved towards the elevator. For some reason, the calico cat that would normally be with Index was now sitting alone in the corridor. The cleaning robot arrived in front of Kamijou, and Maika again prevented it from moving forward by putting the mop in front of it.

“It’s an emergency! The silver-haired nun has been taken away!”

“What?”

Kamijou could not help but shout. Maika’s face looked pale as she continued on.

“It’s a kidnapping, abduction! The culprit said that if I call the guards, he’d kill her, so I didn’t do anything... I’m sorry, Kamijou Touma!”

The silver-haired girl she was talking about should be Index. Maika did not look like she was joking. Moreover, there were too many possible reasons why Index would be kidnapped.

She was a magical library with 103,000 grimoires memorized in her head. All the magicians in the world wanted the knowledge in her brain, and on August 31st, she had already been kidnapped once because of that reason.

“Wait a minute, what's going on? Could you explain?”

Asked by Kamijou, Maika stuttered as she explained the details.

Two hours ago, Maika had come to the student dormitory for practical work. While sweeping the floor, she had caught sight of a bored Index in the corridor of the seventh floor, and had gone to talk to her. In the middle of their chat,

someone had suddenly covered Index’s mouth from behind and abducted her.

“When the kidnapper left, he gave me an envelope. There's something written on the letter inside…”

Maika handed over a long, rectangular envelope normally used for sending advertisements. Her voice was trembling, likely not just due to fear, but probably because she was also blaming herself for her uselessness.

Kamijou lowered his head, looking at the letter, and said,

“You don’t have to blame yourself; it’s better than doing something and making the situation worse.”

Although it was intended to console Maika, that statement made her even more distressed. It could not be helped, since in an ordinary school life, there were very few chances to feel this kind of burning tension.

“Oh, yeah, what does that bastard look like?”

Maika looked up, thought for a while, and said,

“Uhm… His height was above 1.8 meters; he was white, but his Japanese was still very fluent; and I couldn't tell what country he was from just from his appearance…”

“Uh huh.”

“He was wearing priest’s robes.”

“Hm?”

“But he had a strong perfume smell. His hair was dyed red and reached his shoulders. There was a silver ring on each of his fingers, and a tattoo that looked like a bar code under his right eye. He had a cigarette in his mouth, and he wore earrings…”

“…Oi, I’m rather familiar with that bastardly British priest.”

Maika revealed a look of suspicion. Kamijou opened the envelope and found a

letter inside. On the letter were neat rows of words, which seemed to have been written with a mechanical pencil. It looked like a ruler had been used to make them neat.

"Kamijou Touma: if you want her alive, go to the abandoned theater ‘Twilight Theatre’ outside Academy City at seven tonight. Alone."

“…there‘re still people nowadays who'd use a ruler to disguise their handwriting?”

In this age, it was naive to believe that using a ruler disguised someone's handwriting. Based on the technology of the laser that read the information on a CD’s surface, investigators have developed a way to identify the different characteristics of when a person’s fingers slightly trembled using the grooves in the text. Not to mention, many people in Academy City were mind-readers.

This guy might have done everything properly, but to Kamijou, it was just a lame joke.

What on earth is that idiot doing? Don’t tell me he came to play with us just because it’s summer holidays now?

According to Maika’s testimony, the culprit who had abducted Index was her colleague, Stiyl Magnus. But that guy would never do anything to endanger her; on the contrary, that guy would rush into enemy territory to protect her.

The tension vanished in an instant.

Kamijou could not help but feel sympathy for the distressed Maika.

“Erm… Maika, don’t worry. The culprit should be a friend of Index's and mine, so don’t worry…”

“The cul…culprit is a friend? Then isn’t the motive twisted love?”

“Ah, erm…it isn’t really that sort of thing…though it’s true that this twisted love may exist…”

Seeing Maika’s face become even paler, Kamijou sighed.

When he flipped the envelope upside down, a stack of papers fell out. Opening and looking at them, Kamijou realized that they were exit permits and other related documents. All the blanks had been filled in. Kamijou could not help but think, *How did they do all these? It's true that one can easily leave Academy City with these documents, but to request for all these would require a serious examination…*

The strong contrast between the stupidity of the threatening letter and the well-preparedness of the required documents stunned Kamijou.

What on Earth is that priest thinking?

Part 3

The abandoned "Twilight Theatre" was located about three kilometers away from Academy City.

Business had stopped just three weeks ago, which was why the building still did not look damaged. Furthermore, all the interior equipment had been removed, so it seemed rather empty inside right now, and, as no one had swept the area since then, everything was covered in dust. It could not be considered a ruin, though. The place could be reopened if one cleaned it up and reinstalled the equipment.

It looked like a "hibernating" building. Maybe the owner was not planning to take down the building for now and was looking for a new buyer.

Index was waiting on the empty stage. The hall was large, about as big as a sports hall, and the auditorium and the stage were joined together. There were no windows, and the lighting had been removed, so the only source of light was the setting sun outside the five opened doors. Index knelt on the dim stage, frowning and showing her displeasure.

"Despicable man."

"I can't deny that, nor will I do so."

Until he controlled his emotions, Stiyl Magnus looked a bit fearful facing the girl's hostile glare. In the dim area, the flaming tip of his cigarette twitched up and down. The white smoke swayed in the air before it grazed the "No Smoking" sign and disappeared.

"You should be able to understand all this, right? I won't ask you if I need to repeat myself, since with your memory, repeating the same thing over again is meaningless."

"…an official order from the Anglican Church."

Index remembered the explanation she had been given when she had first arrived here. There was finally someone who could decode The Book of the Law, which no one had been able to decode before. That person's name was Orsola Aquinas. It was feared that once someone successfully decoded The Book of the Law, the Angelic Technique could then be used. When Orsola had come to Japan, the book had been stolen, and the culprit was believed to be the Amakusa Church. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church had begun a series of actions to get back The Book of the Law and Orsola.

Kanzaki Kaori, the former leader of the Amakusa Church, now a member of the Anglican Church, was missing, and she might possibly do something she should not.

On the surface, the Anglicans seemed to be on the side of the Roman Catholics, but in actuality, they wanted to defuse this situation before Kanzaki Kaori could do anything troublesome.

"Such a formal 'job', and you want to get Touma involved?"

"To be honest, I don't see the need to get him involved, either; these are orders from the higher ups, however."

Stiyl twitched his cigarette and said,

"Besides, our position is rather awkward, too. If we were to ask Kamijou Touma, who belongs to Academy City, directly, people may view it as the science side interfering with internal affairs on the magic side. If this affair had happened within Academy City, we could use the excuse of self-defence for Kamijou Touma, but such an excuse won't work now. So, in order to get him to

participate, we needed to give him a motive.”

That was why Stiyl had kidnapped Index.

In other words, the reason Kamijou left Academy City would be "to rescue Index", and that would not be related to Orsola or The Book of the Law. But while doing so, he would "just so happen" to meet the Amakusas, and in order to protect Index, he would have to fight them: that was the excuse that Stiyl had planned for Kamijou.

Although she was from the magic side, Index could stay in Academy City temporarily due to a certain deal made between Academy City and the Anglican Church. Thus, for Kamijou Touma, a resident of Academy City, to rescue Index, the guest, was not a strange thing.

“I understand everything up to now, but I can’t accept it.”

“Really?”

“That’s right; there’s no need to beat around the bush to do this. Just a little ‘Please help me!’ will be enough to get Touma to come to my rescue. No matter how dangerous the place is, he'll always come. That's why I don’t want his help.”

“…really.”

Stiyl smiled faintly.

Like a father listening to a girl talking about her favorite boyfriend, Stiyl revealed a slight smile.

“Okay, what will you do next? The Book of the Law and Orsola Aquinas are now in the Amakusa Church's hands, right? If so, are you going to rush into the enemy’s base?”

The girl asked rather seriously. Now that Kamijou was involved, she wanted to get accurate information to try to decrease the level of danger that Kamijou Touma would face.

“No, the situation has changed.”

Distressed, Stiyl blew out white smoke as he said,

“Eleven minutes ago, in order to rescue Orsola, the Roman Catholics began a fierce battle with the escaping Amakusas.”

Index squinted her eyes.

The method of communication was most likely the smoke from that cigarette. Several times, Index had found that the long trails of smoke had magic in them, and though there was no wind, the white smoke quivered unnaturally. No matter the age, smoke signals have always been used as a tool of long-distance communication. Stored in Index’s memory were many ways to utilize smoke signals.

“There is no need for me to be here if the battle was successful, right?”

“That’s right. It wasn’t a complete victory, however; it seems to have been an intense battle. Luckily, no one was killed. But The Book of the Law is still missing, and Orsola was reported to have escaped amidst the chaos.”

“When you say that she has escaped, does that mean that she hasn’t met up with the Roman Catholics?”

“That’s right. She’s still missing, so she might end up in the hands of the Amakusas again.”

“…that doesn’t sound good.”

If a hostage tried to escape, the kidnapper would naturally respond with violence. If a hostage who had escaped once were to be recaptured, the kidnapper would use whatever cruel means necessary to make the hostage not think of escaping again.

It seemed that, in this situation, time was of the essence. Right now, the Roman Catholics and the Amakusas must have been trying to find and recover the escaped Orsola.

“Too bad I can’t change the contents of the letter, or else I'd tell Kamijou Touma to get here faster. If possible, I'd like to meet him before my co-combatant from the Roman Catholic Church arrives…”

Right after Stiyl had finished speaking, a figure appeared in the wide-open entrance of the hall.

“…too bad; it seems like we can’t wait for him. We have to go.”

The figure belonged to the co-combatant.

Part 4

“It seems like I’ve been out quite often…if possible, I'd like to do some good sightseeing.”

Now outside Academy City, Kamijou muttered to himself as he proceeded through the perimeter wall. The height of the wall was more than five meters; the thickness, around three meters.

Come to think of it, during the preparation of Daihaseisai, the security's been rather lax.

Kamijou turned back and looked at the entrance of Academy City from a distance. For Daihaseisai, a festival with an attendance of 2.3 million people, the preparations needed were quite vast, not to mention that there would be many outsiders from different industries coming to Academy City. The security in Academy City was normally rather tight, but the situation now forced them to let down their guard. With the documents that Kamijou had, the guard inspection had become even more relaxed.

To cut a long story short, after Kamijou had handed the calico cat over to Tsuchimikado Maika, he had left Academy City.

Looking at his watch, he noticed that it was now just past 6 PM; there was still nearly one hour until the time indicated in the letter.

Kamijou had to put in a lot of effort to find the location of the Twilight Theatre, since the GPS map on the phone had not indicated any abandoned buildings. It

was at that point that Kamijou had realized refreshing information too fast had its own downsides. Kamijou had then thought of an alternative plan, and had therefore gone to a convenience store to buy one of those faded, slower-updating Tokyo tourist handbooks. But upon searching his pockets, he had realized that he had not brought his wallet along. Thinking about it, he had immediately rushed out of Academy City after talking to Maika, and so had forgotten to get his wallet. Out of ideas, Kamijou could only endure the stare of the store clerk as he memorized the map into his head.

Erm…after walking through that lane, past that road…Ugh! I'm forgetting just about everything! How I really envy Index's brain…

Kamijou let his thoughts run wild as he walked toward a bus stop.

There was still one kilometer left to the designated location. Tired after the day at school, Kamijou really wanted to just sit on a bus and enjoy the air conditioning while it took him to his destination. Too bad he did not even have a yen on him.

*Damn it...*sigh*...I don't care if I can ride a bus or not; all I want is a place where there's an air conditioner.*

The bus stop was rather small. There was only a large plastic umbrella over two long benches, both of which were so old that they were covered in cracks.

At that moment, Kamijou found someone standing at the bus stop.

She seemed like a foreigner, and was about as tall as Kamijou. Her eyes were fixed on the timetable. She stared at it for a long time, however, and it seemed like she was having trouble.

Her attire, a black nun's habit that she still wore in such hot weather, was rather unique. Naturally, the sleeves and the dress were long. Looking closer, Kamijou noticed long silver zippers around the elbows and about 20 cm above the knees. It seemed like the sleeves and skirt of the nun's habit were detachable, though she had not done that. Her hands were covered with thin white gloves, and her hair could not be seen, for it was not only covered by a nun's cap, like what Index wore, but also a scarf. Since her hair could be covered just like that, it would seem she had short hair.

Kamijou looked at her out of the corner of his eye and thought:

Uh, it's a nun...could she be a killer nun who's related to Index?

That thought might have been considered a severe prejudice to all the nuns in the world, but Kamijou had suffered during the summer thanks to people like Stiyl and Tsuchimikado. Now, whenever Kamijou saw a girl in nuns' clothing, he would naturally be cautious.

“I’m sorry…”

The nun suddenly started talking to Kamijou, speaking in rather polite Japanese.

“Sorry to take your time, but may I ask: can I take this bus to get to Academy City?”

Not only was she courteous, but there was also a sense of awkwardness.

Kamijou stopped and looked at the nun. The attire that covered her entire body made her large breasts and slim waist stand out even more; some may even have suspected that she was emphasizing them on purpose. Anyway, she was a weird one.

“No way, there’s no bus that goes to Academy City.”

“Eh?”

“There’s no transport link between Academy City and the outside world, so one can’t take a bus or tram there. Only the taxis that are registered by Academy City can go in there, but walking is a lot less expensive.”

“I see, so that’s why you chose to walk out of Academy City.”

The nun spoke nonchalantly.

Kamijou looked up. It was not possible to see the entrance to Academy City from here. He looked back at the nun, who pulled out something from her sleeve. Looking closely, he saw it was actually a cheap-looking mini-telescope that was used in theaters.

“I used this to watch you leave Academy City,” she said as she smiled.

At that moment, a bus arrived. Like the bus stop, it looked rather dilapidated.

The automatic doors of the bus opened, releasing a sound like a soft drink bottle being opened.

Kamijou did not intend to take the bus, so he walked away from the bus stop. He turned to the nun and said,

“In any case, taking the bus is not going to bring you to Academy City. If you have an entry permit, you just need to walk to the entrance. It takes only about seven to eight minutes to get there.”

“Many thanks. I’m grateful that you would take some time off your busy schedule to guide me.”

The nun dressed in black gave a brilliant smile, bowed to Kamijou, and then—

-got on the bus.

“…Oi! Didn’t I tell you that you can’t take the bus just five seconds ago?!”

“Ah, ya. You did say that, alright.”

The nun grabbed the hem of her dress with both hands and hastily got off the bus now parked on the road. Kamijou then went on:

“I just told you. There's no transport link between Academy City and the outside world, so one can’t take a bus or a tram there. If you want to get there, you just have to walk there, do you understand?”

“You did say that. I’m sorry to bother you so many times.”

The nun smiled bitterly, nodding to show her appreciation. She then climbed the steps of the bus and got on.

“Hey! You aren’t smiling just to let my words fall on deaf ears, are you?”

“Eh? No, I never had that intention.”

The nun again rushed down from the bus. The bus driver showed a look of irritation, closed the doors, and rudely drove off.

Kamijou felt worried when he saw that the nun still looked confused. This lady

would most likely get lost within ten minutes if no one was looking out for her. The nun did not seem to sense Kamijou's worries, however, and said,

"Aiya. Why do you look so frustrated? Would you like some candy?"

"I'm not really frustrated...what flavor is this candy? Orange?"

Kamijou instinctively took the orange-red candy. He was too embarrassed to throw it away, so he put it into his mouth.

After sucking on it for a while…

"So bitter! What is this? It's definitely not orange!"

"…erm, it seems to be astringent persimmon flavor. I'm not sure about the details, but I heard that it can quench thirst."

"…oh, that's because it can easily stimulate the secretion of saliva. But the weather is so hot now that all the water content in the body would evaporate, so it makes no sense to produce saliva."

"Ara, you want to replenish your body fluids? Why didn't you say so earlier? I have some tea here."

"Although I really want to ask why you would put a thermoflask into the sleeve of your robe, never mind. I just so happen to be thirsty. What kind of tea is that?"

"Barley tea."

"Oh, I want it; can I have some?"

Kamijou said happily. *Drinking ice-cold barley tea in the summer is the best,* Kamijou thought. He accepted the thermoflask's cap, which was now filled with barley tea.

"----so hot! Why is this barley tea scalding hot?"

"Eh? I heard that drinking hot drinks during hot weather is part of your country's culture…"

"An old granny! You're an old granny, right? No wonder I felt that your

mannerisms were too weird; your thought process is like that of an old granny!”

Kamijou roared while the nun gave a friendly smile. At this point, he could not just pour away the barley tea in the cap. Kamijou trembled as he poured that barley tea, hot as lava, into his throat.

“…er…thanks. Oh, yeah, Miss Nun, may I ask you something? Are you going to Academy City? Erm, I just said this, but to enter Academy City, one must have an entry permit issued by the city. Do you have one?”

“Entry permit…?”

Of course, the nun revealed a surprised look. Needless to say, without an entry permit, one could not get through the entrance gate.

After Kamijou explained the entire situation to the nun, she gave a troubled look. She placed her hand on her head and said,

“May I know how can I get this permit?”

“…I’m sorry, it’s impossible for any ordinary person to get one. Only a close relative of a student or an industry worker who's delivering goods and materials can get one, and they have to be vetted first.”

“Oh…if so, then I’ll have to give up.”

The nun drooped her shoulders, looking rather sad. But her giving up so easily made it seem like it was not really important to her to get inside Academy City.

It’s not that I don’t want to help, but I can’t help her out now…

A sense of guilt crept into Kamijou’s mind. The nun said to Kamijou, “Then I shall say goodbye here,” before walking toward Academy City.

“Stop right there! Didn’t I tell you that you can’t go into Academy City without an entry permit…are you listening!?”

The nun revealed a look of realization, stopped, and then turned around. She had been smiling happily a while ago, but now she looked rather disappointed, as if a cloud of haze hovered over her.

Kamijou saw the troubled look on the nun's face and did not know what to do. While the magicians without permits had been able to get past the wall easily and whenever they wanted to, the nun in front of him did not seem to have that sort of ability.

Thinking about it for a while, Kamijou could not come up with anything that would help the nun. No matter the situation, one had to have an entry permit to get into Academy City. He had no time to dilly-dally at a place like this since he has to deal with Index first. He had to get to the designated location at the designated time, no matter what.

"Oh, yeah, why do you want to get into Academy City?"

"Erm…"

The nun tilted her head slightly and said,

"Actually, I'm being hunted right now."

Upon hearing that, Kamijou felt as if the surrounding temperature had dropped by several degrees.

"Being hunted…?"

"Yes. It's a bit complicated, but right now, I'm trying my best to escape. I heard that even with the power of many churches, they can't enter Academy City, so I wanted to escape to Academy City and hide there."

"The church…hey, don't tell me you have something to do with the magicians…?"

The nun was somewhat surprised on hearing that. She said, "Do you know about the existence of magicians?"

"Looking at your reaction, I guess I'm right." Kamijou sighed and continued, "But if you're really being hunted, even escaping into Academy City won't be completely safe. Academy City has been invaded by magicians constantly."

After seeing what had happened to Index firsthand, Kamijou understood that the magicians would never give up just because the target had escaped into

Academy City.

“Then what should I do…?”

The nun looked like she was going to cry. Kamijou obviously understood how scary the magicians were, so he did not want to abandon her.

“…can you read the bus route map?”

“Buses are such old news now--like several hundred years ago! Where did this ‘route map’ come out from!? Weren’t we talking about how to get to Academy City!?”

Kamijou exclaimed.

The nun again revealed a stunned look. Kamijou was really in a fix thanks to this nun.

If this nun was really being hunted by the magicians, then he could not just leave her alone, but Kamijou had something really urgent that he needed to take care of right now. Now that Index had been "kidnapped", he was worried. Even though this kidnapping sounded like a hoax, he could not just ignore it. Kamijou, who unwillingly had to make a choice between these two, pulled his hair roughly, not knowing what to do.

Suddenly, he thought of a good idea.

Wait, wait, wait… if I bring this nun along while I'm looking for Index, wouldn’t that solve the problem?

It really was a good idea--except that it had been clearly written in the letter that he had to "go there alone".

Part 5

Stiyl and Index walked out of the theater hall of the Twilight Theatre and arrived

at the lobby, which seemed to be where the ticket booth had originally been.

A girl in a black nun's habit was walking in front of them.

She seemed to be a year or two younger than Index. Her hair was slightly reddish and was tied into many pencil-thin braids. The sleeves of her robe nearly covered her fingers, but her skirt was so short that her thighs were exposed. Looking closely, there seemed to be something that looked like a zipper on the lower edge of her skirt. It seemed like the skirt was part of a detachable dress, but only the lower half had been removed. She appeared extremely thin, as her slim waist was even slimmer than Index's, who was rather thin herself.

She was about as tall as Index, but she wore soft wooden sandals with soles about 30 cm thick; as she walked, they made a sound like horseshoes tapping on the ground. These sandals were called "chopines", and had been very fashionable in Italy during the 17th century.

She was a nun from the Roman Catholic Church.

Her name was Agnese Sanctis.

“The situation is extremely chaotic right now; there’s so much information that we can’t handle it all. We have no idea where Orsola is right now. Also, The Book of the Law is still missing. That's really bothering us.”

None of the people present were Japanese; Agnese, however, was speaking in fluent Japanese.

“Just now, we ambushed the Amakusas as they were deporting Orsola. Although some of us managed to save her, she got taken away by them again before the rest could meet up with her. Then we got her back, but then another group of Amakusas captured her again...and this went on and on and on. Because the area in which we trapped them was too big, it ended up that each group had too few people despite our large numbers, and the Amakusas got an opportunity. Just as both sides were fighting to get Orsola, she disappeared.”

Agnese’s Japanese was mixed with polite honorifics and rude words.

If she learned her Japanese while doing her mission in Japan, then it seems like the Japanese people that she talked to were mostly detectives or policemen, Stiyl

thought.

He saw Agnese turn around to look at him. Her short skirt lifted slightly, revealing even more of her snow-white thighs.

“What, got a problem? Ah, I’m sorry, it’s not that I don’t speak English, but my English has a very heavy Italian accent. I don’t really mind if I’m talking to people of other countries, but I don’t dare show my inferior English to you British.”

Stiyl did not seem to mind, as he shook the cigarette in his mouth and said,

“You don’t have to worry about those trivial issues; we can even talk in Italian.”

“Please don’t speak Italian. If I were to hear anyone speak Italian with such a strong British accent, I'd probably laugh so much that I wouldn't be able to focus on my work. In this situation, it’s better to use another language that we can communicate with, like Japanese. No one will argue if we use a language that neither of us are comfortable with.”

Agnese’s thick sandals continued to make that horseshoe-tapping sound.

It sounds like she has a point, but if she were to follow this logic, how would she communicate if she were to meet a Japanese person? Stiyl unnecessarily thought for her. *Also, if she isn’t going to use the native language to speak with the people of a country, what would be the point of learning their language?*

Up until now, Index had remained silent.

Stiyl stole a glance at Index, who was still unhappy as she curled her lips, not saying a single word. He then turned back to Agnese and said,

“Then, does that mean that the Amakusa Church, who stole The Book of the Law and Orsola from you guys, is a threatening force?”

“You were trying to say, ‘The largest Christian sect in the world, the Roman Catholic Church, is useless despite looking so strong’, right? To be honest, we can’t argue against that. Just by looking at the numbers and armaments, we clearly have the upper hand, but they have the geographical advantage, especially since Japan is their territory. We’re really angry over being

overwhelmed by a much smaller organization, but I have to admit, they're really strong.”

“…so it seems that they won’t just surrender quietly.”

Stiyl’s voice hinted at a sense of disappointment.

Forcing an opponent to surrender after showing them a disparity in power would be the fastest and most peaceful way to resolve this situation. But now that the enemy had enough ability to reject any negotiations, it seemed that a long fight would be inevitable.

The longer the battle against the Amakusa Church, the more likely the chance that Kanzaki would intervene. This meant that, in order to complete the mission, Stiyl would have to give up all forms of compassion and take the Amakusas out quickly before Kanzaki could realize what was going on.

The objective of the Roman Catholic Church was to retrieve The Book of the Law and Orsola Aquinas, not to destroy the Amakusa Church. Once they completed their objective, the Roman Catholics would pull out immediately.

Now, they just had to try and make the Amakusas lose their will to fight.

“I’m quite unfamiliar with Christian history in Japan. Do you know what kind of techniques they use? Maybe I can make use of how the enemy fights to prepare some searching or defensive types of magical arrays or talismans.”

Although Stiyl had often fought alongside Kanzaki, who had originally been a member of the Amakusa Church, he had no intention to analyze the techniques she had used; that was because Kanzaki was a Saint, one of less than twenty people in the world who possessed the Stigma. Even if he were to do the analysis correctly, an ordinary man like Stiyl would not be able to use the techniques anyway. It was like how no one would use a 50-cm ruler to measure the distance between the Earth and the Sun.

Agnese seemed to find it difficult to answer the question that the priest had raised.

“To be honest…we haven't yet gathered enough information regarding the techniques that the Amakusas use. Since they’re derived from Saint

Francisco's[3] Society of Jesus, they should be a branch of the Roman Catholic Church. But they've been so greatly influenced by Japan and China that they're now completely different from the Roman Catholic Church."

Hearing that, Stiyl did not blame Agnese. These people were able to sense that the Amakusa style was mixed with some aspects of Buddhism and Shintoism after fighting them for just two days, which showed that their analytical abilities were rather strong.

Stiyl turned to look at Index, wanting to seek her advice.

Now was the right time for Index, who had knowledge exceeding ten thousand times that of a normal person, to fulfill her role. The pure-white nun remained calm and composed as she said,

"The Amakusa's speciality is 'secrecy', since they're Christians whose nature is to deceive others; they hide the teachings of Christianity inside Shintoism and Buddhism completely, and use rituals and techniques as part of their greetings, diet, and behavior in their everyday lives. They cover all their tracks so that others won't even notice their existence. Thus, they don't use any spells or magical arrays. They use pots, pans, kitchen knives, bathrooms, quilts, showers, humming…any thing or action that looks rather ordinary to activate their magic. Because of that, no matter how skilled the magician is, they'd be fooled once they entered the ceremonial area of the Amakusa, since, to them, it just looks like an ordinary kitchen or bathroom."

Stiyl shook the cigarette in his mouth and said,

"So, this is a group of experts highly skilled in the Idol Theory. Hm, seems like their specialty would be long-range sniping and not close-range combat. Hopefully, they don't have a large technique like the Gregorian Chant."

"No. They've been studying other countries' cultures ever since the Edo period, and have fused sword techniques of all ages to create their own unique style. They're able to use any weapon with ease, whether it be a Japanese sword or a Western broadsword."

"...they're well-versed in both literature and martial arts? That's really troublesome."

Stiyl felt vexed. Agnese, who had unknowingly been left out of the conversation, angrily kicked the floor with her soles. With every kick, her extremely short miniskirt would flip up slightly, making a rather funny "pop" sound in the process.

Dangling the cigarette in his mouth, the priest turned to look at Agnese.

“Can you tell me where we’ll be looking for The Book of the Law and Orsola Aquinas? We can’t just idle around and do nothing. Tell me, where do we start?”

“Ah, we’ll do the searching.”

Suddenly involved in the conversation again, Agnese was obviously flustered. She quickly straightened herself.

“Human wave tactics are our specialty. We have about 250 of our members here, so it wouldn't even matter if we were to add one or two more; it wouldn't make much of a difference. Also, you use a different command system, so it would likely cause more confusion than good.”

“...then why bring me here?”

Stiyl frowned as he asked. Agnese smiled and said,

“Simple: there’s a place we can’t search, and we need your help.”

“Which place? Japan doesn’t have a church that’s directly governed by the Anglican Church. The only place we’re allowed to search is the British embassy.”

“No, I’m talking about Academy City.” Agnese raised her hand as she said, “Once Orsola escapes to Academy City, the Amakusa won’t be able to catch her. That isn’t impossible, is it? No, it might be harder to capture her. So, I had hoped to use you guys to get in touch with Academy City. The Roman Catholic Church has no connections within Academy City, so it’s a bit bothersome for us."

“I see… but since it’s for that sort of reason, you should have told me earlier; that way, it would've saved a lot of hassle.”

Index, who was temporarily staying in Academy City, understood that there was

a certain level of relationship between Academy City and the Anglican Church. Of course, the significance of this diplomatic relationship was not large, but if the Roman Catholic Church, who did not have any diplomatic relations, were to contact Academy City through the Anglican Church, who did have some link with them, there would be less of a disturbance.

“...anyway, if Orsola were to escape to Academy City, the situation would get rather complicated.”

“That's just a possibility, though. Hopefully, Orsola will not panic so much that she loses her common sense. In any case, how long would it take for you guys to contact Academy City, and confirm whether Orsola is in there or not?”

“It’s impossible to settle all those things with just a phone call; I'd have to call St. George Cathedral first, and then communicate with Academy City through them...even if it’s an emergency situation, it’d take about seven to ten minutes. If we wanted permission to enter Academy City, it’d be even more troublesome. Technically, we could still sneak in, but being in official positions, we'd be better off not doing that.”

“Anyway, please try and confirm it as fast as possible-”

Halfway through her sentence, Agnese suddenly froze.

Following her line of sight, Stiyl realized that she was looking at the entrance on the other side of the lobby. Made of five glass doors that opened outward, the theater entrance was rather big.

“What? What’s going on-?”

Even Stiyl froze after halfway through his question.

“Hm?”

On the other side of the windowpanes, there was an open patch of ground covered with asphalt: the parking lot. Although the theater was extremely big, the open area was tiny. Tenacious weeds had grown and emerged from the cracks in the hard asphalt. There was nothing else in the empty area...except for two shadows on the empty, abandoned lot.

The two shadows belonged to two people.

“Ah, it’s Touma.”

Index said the name of the rather familiar-looking boy.

“Or… Orsola Aquinas?”

Agnese said the name of the black-robed nun beside the boy.

The two people, whose names had been called, did not see the magicians that were inside the Twilight Theatre.

Part 6

Let us rewind time a little bit.

Although it was now evening and the air was cool, the fatigue brought by walking three kilometers in the summer seemed to had far exceeded Kamijou’s imagination.

Come… come to think of it, today’s Physical Education lesson and several other things have tired me out…

Kamijou, who had left his wallet in the dormitory, could only walk on.

Notably, the slightly older nun, dressed in black and walking beside him, was also penniless. God knew how she was going to take the bus.

Anyway, Kamijou, who had already walked three kilometers in this hot September, arrived at the entrance of the Twilight Theatre, sweaty and tired.

“May I ask… Sister, the weather’s so hot, and you’re wearing a long-sleeved black robe. How can you smile so happily and not even sweat at all?”

“Ah, this? Compared to spiritual suffering, physical pain is almost nothing.”

“…You’re one heavily abused sister.”

“Excuse me, how long will it take us to reach the bus stop?”

“Could you stop asking about the bus already!? Didn’t I tell you that I’m bringing you to the Anglicans? Don’t tell me that the words I’ve just spoken went in one ear and came out the other again!”

“Ah, excuse me, you’re sweating a lot.”

“Damn it! Talking to you is so hard when you keep changing the topic!”

“Don’t move. I’ll wipe it off for you.”

“Eh? What? Wait a…”

The nun suddenly pulled a handkerchief from her sleeve and wiped Kamijou’s face. Although it was just a handkerchief, it was decorated with some high-quality lace on the edges. It felt warm and had a slight aroma of roses. Kamijou wanted to escape, but he was restrained by the nun, who was using her unimaginable strength to hold his head.

“Okay, I’m done.”

The nun revealed her vibrant smile as she looked at Kamijou.

“…Um, thanks.”

Kamijou dragged his tired body into the abandoned Twilight Theatre.

The Twilight Theatre looked very large from afar, but the parking lot in front was rather small; one might suspect that it was for the employees only. Maybe it was because a bus stop and a multi-story parking garage were already next to it. The entire place was surrounded by metal plates and iron bars about two meters tall, and the entrance used by employees seemed to have been forcefully opened; one could see a very thick chain and a large lock on the floor.

There were no large pieces of machinery in the tiny parking lot. None of the building's walls had been vandalized, and the glass was not broken. Perhaps there was already a buyer, and someone came over to maintain this building

because of that.

Going closer, one could observe that the Twilight Theatre was larger than a stadium, and square-shaped. The designers might have wanted to imitate a certain famous theater, or maybe they had been too lazy to design anything fancy.

It's so hot outside, so they should be inside, right?

Kamijou looked past the entrance of the Twilight Theatre. It was a rather large entrance, with five glass doors facing outwards. It had not been sealed with anything like planks, so it looked like a case of suspension of business rather than a dump. Just as Kamijou thought that, one of the doors opened.

"Eh?"

Kamijou could not help but shout.

Two of the three people walking out of the building were familiar to him. They were Index and Stiyl.

The last one was a girl who looked even younger than Index, one whom Kamijou had never met before. She was wearing a black nun's habit, similar to that of the nun he had met at the bus stop. This girl, however, had removed the part of her skirt below the zipper, so the skirt was now a tiny mini-skirt. Looking downward, he realized that she was wearing wooden sandals with 30-cm-thick soles.

The moment Index saw Kamijou, she asked,

"Hey, Touma, where did you meet that nun?"

"...you're asking that the moment we meet? Honestly, I have some questions for that evil priest beside you. Why did you have to go to such great lengths to play this kidnapping game with me? I want to know: Why do I have to walk three kilometers on such a hot day!? I really want to know why!"

Kamijou bellowed. Stiyl showed an impatient look, saying, "So, you just realised that I tricked you? I called you here to help us find a certain person; Index was the bait to lure you out. Oh, yeah, this is the person in charge right

now: Agnese Sanctis of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Stiyl nonchalantly pointed his cigarette at the girl wearing thick-soled sandals. The girl gave a deep bow and said, “He… hello.” She might have done her research and found out that the Japanese habitually bowed to others, but her bowing so low made her look like a hotel receptionist.

Kamijou felt panicky about talking to a stranger now. Although his heart was filled with rage, he could not just vent his frustrations on a person he had just met for the first time.

It seemed like Stiyl wanted to seize the opportunity, now that Kamijou was so panicky, as he said,

“So sorry. I have no time to listen to your stupid problems. I just said that the reason I called you here was to help me find a person. Even though there are 250 people looking for her right now, there's still no news as of yet. This mission's rather urgent, as it concerns a person’s life, so I hope that you can give us your fullest attention."

“'No time to listen to my stupid problems?' You called me all the way here, you bastard, and you give me that smug look!? Damn it, what's going on? How does it concern a person’s life? Tell me everything! And, to be honest, what kind of searching ability does an outsider of the magic world like me have?! Is it alright to leave such an important task to a high school student!?”

“Hm, well, you don’t have to worry so much. You just need to hand over the nun beside you.”

“What?”

Kamijou's eyes widened. Irritated, Stiyl blew the smoke from the cigarette out of his mouth and said, “The sister beside you is the person we’re looking for. Her name is Orsola Aquinas. Thanks for your help, Kamijou Touma; you can go back now.”

“…oi, oi. Using a kidnapping as an excuse to lure me out, forcing me to use these documents that came from who-knows-where to leave Academy City, then making me walk three kilometers under the big, hot sun when the temperature's around forty degrees Celsius... and now you’re telling me to go back?”

Kamijou muttered.

“Didn’t I thank you already? What, do you expect me to treat you to some shaved ice?”

Kamijou Touma lowered his head, gritting his teeth. Index stood near him, her face looking pale, not knowing what to do.

“Pow!” Something near Kamijou’s temple broke, creating this sound.

“Up until now, I thought that, even though our personalities don’t match, at least I could make a friend. Really! That's what I thought at first! But now I've changed my mind!”

“Stop saying all that nonsense and hand Orsola over to Agnese. Don’t tell me you want me to alleviate that loneliness? Such a pity; I can’t do it, and neither do I want to. That’s too gross.”

Even the words he had said in anger had been coldly dismissed. Kamijou Touma looked like he had used up all his energy as he collapsed onto the ground.

“Ahhh… huuuuu! I have no more energy to cook dinner today! Index, our dinner tonight will be a simple takeaway pork bento.”

“No way! Touma!”

The girl with a huge appetite shouted desperately.

Kamijou ignored her as he spoke to the nun dressed in black, Orsola Aquinas,

“…oh, yeah, didn’t you say that you were being hunted? Does that situation have to do with those people looking for you? Anyway, now that you’re reunited with your comrades, you should be fine, right?”

For some reason, after hearing Kamijou’s words, Orsola trembled. It seemed like she wanted to suppress her shock, but had failed to.

Upon seeing that, Kamijou felt suspicious. Orsola was not looking at Kamijou, but at Stiyl and the rest.

At that point, Stiyl closed one eye and said slowly,

“Mm, you don’t have to feel insecure. Once the mission is over, the Anglicans will pull back. Of course, for someone of a different sect, like you, to be wary of us is alright.”

To an outsider like Kamijou, these people were either "church members" or "residents of the magic world".

But in fact, these people were divided into different sects, like Roman and English. They could even turn on each other. Just as Kamijou thought about that, a loud yet deep voice rang out.

“No way. It won't be so easy to take Orsola back.”

The voice came from above Kamijou. Everyone looked upward and saw a softball-sized paper balloon floating about seven meters above them.

The thin paper surface of the balloon continued to vibrate as a man’s voice came out of it.

“Orsola Aquinas, I believe that you yourself know this well. Instead of returning to the Roman Catholic Church, how about you join us instead, and enjoy a much more meaningful life?”

The next instant.

Suddenly, an ear-piercing sound could be heard as the blade of a longsword sprung out of the ground between Kamijou and Orsola. Since everyone’s attention had been preoccupied with the object above them, the sudden change below their feet shocked them. Then, the same sound could be heard another two times, and two more blades came out from the ground. The three blades surrounded Orsola.

The swords were like the fins revealed by sharks swimming near the surface of the water. With Orsola at the center, the three blades cut an equilateral triangle about two meters on each side.

“AAAAHH—”

Orsola, who felt her feet losing support, cried out, 30% out of fear and 70% from confusion. Before her voice could properly convert to a scream, her body, together with the triangular piece of asphalt, fell down into a deep abyss.

“Amakusa!”

Agnese shouted as she stretched her hand out, but it was already too late; Orsola’s body had been swallowed by the darkness. Kamijou rushed to the side of the triangular hole and regretfully covered his mouth.

“Sewers…?”

The paper balloon above them resounded with a slightly delighted, yet clear and powerful voice.

“I knew that if I were to follow the commander of the Roman Catholics, no matter where Orsola Aquinas would run to or who she'd be captured by, she'd eventually be brought here. After hiding underground for so long, my efforts have finally paid off!”

Kamijou did not understand the situation in the least.

He did not know who was in the sewers, or why Orsola had been taken away.

But he knew one thing.

This guy had suddenly appeared and used sharp swords to steal a person away. By listening to what that guy had said, this was not a sudden event, but rather a premeditated plan, so he must have been waiting for this chance all this time.

“Damn it!”

Kamijou looked down the triangular hole. It was too dark inside to estimate the depth, though it did not look so deep. Kamijou decided to jump into the hole.

“Wait! Don’t go! Touma!”

Just as Index frantically shouted,

Several swords suddenly flashed in the darkness.

The numerous swords flashing in the darkness reflected the weak sunlight, and the dim orange light faintly showed the figures of the people in the sewers. It was like a scene in which bandits wield rusted axes and knives, hide in the tall grass along the road, hold their breaths, and patiently wait for their prey.

The thick killing intent gathered to form a hot wind, which spewed out of the hole into Kamijou’s face. Kamijou’s body went numb instantly; he could not move. Stiyl stepped beside Kamijou, pulled out four talismans with runes on

them, and threw them onto the ground around him.

“My hand, bring fire, shape it into a blade, and bring forth thy judgement!”

Stiyl shouted, and, with his fingers, pointed the cigarette upward.

The trail of cigarette smoke changed into orange lines, which converged into a flaming sword.

The newly created strong glow now lit the sewer clearly.

Stiyl grabbed the flaming sword and swung it downwards...but halfway through, he stopped.

Under the glow of the flames, there was no one in the sewer.

The black figures in the sewer seemed to have vanished like the darkness. Neither the figures that had wielded the sharp swords nor Orsola, who had fallen into the hole could be seen. Like ligiidae scattering from the banks of a sea cave, they had dispersed, leaving nothing behind.

The paper balloon floating above them descended slowly.

It floated into the triangular hole, and no one bothered to stop it.

“Damn it, what’s going on?”

Kamijou said bitterly.

“Hey, you'd better give me a proper explanation!”

“If I explain it to you, then who'd be the one to explain it to me?”

Stiyl Magnus said in disdain.

Between the Lines 1

Meanwhile...

On an artificial coast, the setting sun finally disappeared as night approached.

This shore was located several hundred meters away from a beach, and a cliff about ten meters tall was nearby. In order to protect the base of the cliff from erosion, the ground had been strewn with wavestones.

After the sun had completely set, the sea became a deep black color.

As if waiting for nighttime to arrive, a hand quickly stretched out from the black sea.

It was a hand covered by a gauntlet. The heavy gauntlet-covered hand grabbed onto a wavestone, and then, a figure in a full set of Western armor left the sea. From top to bottom, every inch of the figure's skin was covered by metal armor, making it look inhuman.

Once the first one landed, twenty other knights also followed suit, appearing in the sea and climbing up the wavestones. Each of the gauntlets the knights were wearing had the words "United Kingdom" engraved on it. That meant England.

These knights had swum all the way here; it was not an analogy or a figurative way of speech, but rather a fact. They had started from England and swum past the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, across the Indian Ocean, and into Japan.

They had used a sea current manipulation spell handed down by St. Blaise; simply put, it was a high-speed swimming spell that allowed a human to swim around the world in only three days. The spell was not cast on the armor, however, but rather on the user's body; every knight had used his own body to activate the magic spell. Right now, the armor that the knights wore did not have any magical capabilities; that was because the power of the knights was too strong, and so any magical effects would make the armor cumbersome instead. All these knights were far stronger than what any artifact could possibly make them, so if any of them were to wear magical armor, their strong powers would very likely just destroy it.

The organization these knights belonged to did not have a special name; they were just called the "Knights of England".

In the past, the British had used names like "**7th-Macer**"[4] and "**5th-Axer**",[5] but those names had been abandoned seven years ago--not because the knights today had lost their original expertise, but because they had mastered every technique, thus allowing them to enter a whole new realm of power.

The knights wanted this power because of the internal worries in England, which were also the reason why the Knights of England had been formed originally.

The command system in England rested on three equal powers:

The **British Royal Family**, composed of the **Queen Regnant** and her committee.

The **Knights of England**, made up of the **Knight Leader** and his fellow knights.

The **Anglican Church**, formed of the **Archbishop** and her believers.

The relationship between these three was as follows:

The British Royal Family controlled the Knights of England through direct orders;

The Knights of England made use of the Anglican Church through political items;

And the Anglican Church manipulated the British Royal Family through holy advice.

The trinity formed by those three powers created a sense of unparalleled beauty. If one side were to act on its own, the other two would create a large commotion through several means, and prevent the first side from acting. The reason Britain had the most complicated Christian culture in the world was not just that, however.

Britain, also known as the United Kingdom, was made of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Up until today, some places still used their own currency.

On the one hand, even if two countries belonged to the same Anglican sect, there

could still be quarrels amongst them, such as between England and Wales. On the other hand, even if two people each belonged to the Anglican Church and the Knights, if they were both Scottish, they may secretly smuggle some money or information out. The decoder Sherry Cromwell had betrayed the Anglican Church not just because she had had her own motives; her culture had also influenced her passively.

Three sects, four cultures.

The interconnected relations between each side were what made Britain so complicated, and the mission of the Knights of England was to maintain this status quo; however, the United Kingdom had turned this to rubble.

Because of that, the Knights and the Anglican Church held some grudges against each other.

The Knights could not accept that the Anglican Church, the Anglican sect, could have power equivalent to the Knights.

The original purpose of the Anglican Church had been to counter the Roman Catholic Church. Britain had not wanted other countries to meddle in its politics, but the influence of the Roman Catholic Church had been widespread throughout the world. Had Britain not listened to the Roman Catholic Church, they would have been be charged with disobeying the teachings of Christianity. So, Britain had created the Anglican Church, an independent Christian sect, within its country. With that, Britain had been able to declare to the world that "We’re following the orders of the Anglican Church," and so did not have to be ordered around by the Roman Catholic Church anymore.

In other words, the Anglican Church had originally been just a political tool.

If the British Royal Family and the Knights of England were described as large gears, then the Anglican Church could be described as a lubricant.

But today, the Anglican Church had gained enough power to be of equal standing with the Royal Family and the Knights.

The Knights did not want to be restricted by a tool.

So, the Knights would only listen to orders from their leader or the Queen. As

for orders issued by the leader of the Anglican Church, the Knights were normally apathetic about them, and sometimes even disobeyed them.

The Knights had their own ideas regarding the order from the Archbishop, which had been to assist the recovery of The Book of the Law and Orsola Aquinas.

They just needed to kill off all the Amakusa.

The Knights had no reason to follow the orders of someone they did not recognize--the Archbishop--and sacrifice their lives for her. They also did not care about the relationship between the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Amakusa Church.

Even if the Amakusa were to disappear from this world, there would not be any loss in terms of their country's welfare.

With the abilities the Knights possessed, killing off the Amakusa would be too easy. The techniques of the Knights, inherited from the crusaders who had attacked the Middle East in the tenth century, had buried who-knows-how-many believers of other religions since ancient times. Their power was great enough to even wipe an island off the map.

Destroying a weak sect in the far East, the Amakusa, would not even take a day.

Even if the Amakusa had a hostage like Orsola, they could not care less.

The Anglican Church was not even interested in The Book of the Law, since its contents had been ingrained in Index’s brain. Whether Orsola lived or died, the outcome would not affect Britain. The Roman Catholic Church may try to put pressure on Britain, but was it not the Archbishop’s job to pacify the Roman Catholic Church?

The Archbishop had already warned the Knights to be wary of Kanzaki Kaori, the former leader of the Amakusa Church, but they had not taken it to heart. If Kanzaki were to attack in a fit of rage because of the destruction of the Amakusa, the Knights would just send her into oblivion, too.

That had been the knights' original plan.

But such a plan was completely decimated within three seconds.

Just as the knights climbed out of the sea and onto the rocks,

An explosion shook their area.

The explosion blasted every wavestone, each weighing more than one ton, into the air, like a volcanic eruption. The knights, who had originally been standing on the wavestones, flipped in the air to regain their balance. They then searched the ground for a suitable landing spot.

A lady stood at the center of the explosion that had launched the twenty-one knights and numerous pieces of rock.

She had black hair, tied into a ponytail behind her head, and snow-white skin covering her thick muscles. She wore a short-sleeved T-shirt with a knot tied at the bottom, a pair of jeans with one leg cut off, and top-boots. A belt ran around her waist, and under that belt hung a Japanese sword more than two meters long--*Shichiten Shichitou*.

Kanzaki Kaori.

She did not utter a single word as she attacked the twenty-one knights in the sky.

Now that the knights were in the sky, they could not move their bodies freely. Kanzaki’s way of attack was rather simple: strike each of the Knights in turn with her Japanese sword. Kanzaki did not unsheathe the sword, and simply swung it together with its sheath.

But she was as fast as lightning.

In actuality, the knights were only in the air for one second, but they got the feeling that their bodies were stuck in the air. Since Kanzaki was truly too fast, it was as if time had stopped and only she was moving.

If one were to see it through the normal flow of time, they would see something like an invisible whirlwind in the midst of an explosion.

After being hit by the sword, a few crashed to the ground, some buried in the cliff and others beside it, the rest skipping across the water's surface like thrown rocks.

After attacking the twenty-one Knights, Kanzaki landed steadily on a wavestone.

The moist night wind began to gently stroke her hair as knights came falling from the sky, and bell-like percussive sounds reverberated along the entire coast as they landed in the sea.

“I didn’t use my full strength, so this sort of attack probably won't cause any deaths. It's a good thing you're all wearing sturdy equipment; it let me attack without any worry.”

“You…”

Kanzaki’s calm voice, however, became the biggest mockery to the knights. One of the knights tried to stand up, but his body could not move; even budging a finger was difficult for him.

So, the knight could only use his mouth, the single part of his body that he could still move.

“Do you know who we are? Such an action from you is the same as declaring war on the United Kingdom!”

“I’m also a citizen of the United Kingdom. This has nothing to do with the Roman Catholic Church or the Russian Orthodox Church. This is an internal conflict within the Anglican Church, so I believe that it won’t bring too much trouble for the people above… Huh?”

Before Kanzaki could finish speaking, she realized that the knight who had been speaking a while ago had now fainted.

“Some of them fell into the sea...but then, they haven’t removed their swimming spells, so they probably won’t die.”

Kanzaki muttered as she faced the dark, peaceful surface of the sea.

“You say all that with a worried expression, yet there’s not even a sense of spirit in it.”

“!?”

Kanzaki looked mystified by the familiar voice. She turned around and saw a teenager with messy blond hair, blue shades, an aloha shirt, and shorts.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

Once Kanzaki noticed where he was standing, she was shocked. Kanzaki's senses were rather acute, and logically, no one should be able to get near her without being discovered. But right now, the distance between the two of them was merely ten meters, and yet Kanzaki could not sense any presence from Tsuchimikado.

"So, you came to stop me?"

Kanzaki grabbed the sword handle. But the eyes behind Tsuchimikado's sunglasses were still smiling.

"Don't bother, Kanzaki. You can't beat me."

Facing such a critical situation, Tsuchimikado remained calm and collected. He did not have any weapons on him, and he was not assuming a battle pose, either.

"You're strong, but you don't kill. I'm an esper now, and if I were to cast magic on you, I might die. In other words, no matter who wins, death is the only option for me. Let me ask you: do you have the resolve to kill Tsuchimikado, who doesn't want his own life?"

Kanzaki gritted her teeth.

Her magic was supposed to save people, not kill them. A battle where lives would be lost no matter which side won was meaningless to her; one might say that she would avoid it at all costs.

Her fingers, now touching the sword's handle, started to tremble slightly.

At that moment, Tsuchimikado suddenly revealed a smile like that of an innocent child and said,

"You don't have to stare at me like that, nee-chin. My order isn't to stop you, but to resolve the situation before you get into trouble. Also, I have another job to do."

“Job…?”

“That’s right. My order is to steal the original Book of the Law while the Roman Catholics and the Amakusa are fighting each other furiously.”

Kanzaki squinted her eyes and asked,

“Is this an order from the Anglican Church or Academy City?”

“I can’t comment on that. But if you think, you'll find the answer. Think about it: between the magic side and the science side, which would want the grimoire more? And which side am I working for?”

Hearing Tsuchimikado’s words, Kanzaki remained silent.

A mysterious atmosphere surrounded those two; the warm air flowing between them had been frozen.

Several seconds later, Kanzaki looked away from him.

“…I’m leaving. If you want to give a report to the higher ups, go ahead. I don’t mind.”

“I understand. Ah, I’ll take some time to clean up this place; it'd be troublesome if we were to let these guys be captured by the police.”

“Thank you.”

Kanzaki bowed to Tsuchimikado. Tsuchimikado then went on.

“Oh, yeah, nee-chin; what do you want to do now after coming all the way back from England?”

Kanzaki, whose head was still lowered, froze.

After ten whole seconds, Kanzaki raised her head.

“Yeah...”

Kanzaki forced a stiff smile, showing her anger and sorrow, and said,

“...what did I come here for?”

Chapter 2: Roman Orthodox Church.
The_Roman_Catholic_Church.

Part 1

The sun set as night arrived.

The night did not bring about peace, however. Agnese, who was dressed in black robes, continued to issue orders through hand signals and foreign language to the other nuns wearing the same monastic clothes. At the same time, she was holding a quill pen and writing rapidly in a small notebook. “It’s like a telephone,” Index had explained. When one wrote words into that notebook, similar words would appear in other notebooks. *Rather than a telephone, why not call it an e-mail?* Kamijou secretly thought.

Some among this black organization--official nuns from the Roman Catholic Church--had jumped into the sewer through the triangular hole that Orsola's kidnappers had cut open. Others had opened up their maps and used red ink and quill pens to draw lines on the map. Kamijou could not tell whether they were analyzing the enemy’s escape route or setting up positions to monitor and surround them.

It was a noisy and chaotic night. Kamijou, Index, and Stiyl could only stand around and watch from afar. Kamijou could not speak any foreign languages--he did not even know what language the nuns were speaking--so he could not take part in the conversation. As for Index and Stiyl, they had chosen to watch from afar, trying to not cause any confusion among the Roman Catholic nuns, who followed a different command structure altogether.

Enduring his ever-growing hunger, Kamijou said,

“Oi, what did Index and I come here to do? Aren’t the people from the Roman Catholic Church supposed to do this mission? If we can only foolishly stand around, what’s the point of coming all the way here?”

“About that, our reinforcements should've arrived by now. I don’t know why those Knights haven’t arrived yet." Stiyl lamented, puffing out white smoke. “Also, we’ll definitely be useful in this situation--no, more accurately, she’ll definitely be useful.”

The "she" that Stiyl mentioned probably referred to Index.

“She?”

“That’s right, since this concerns a grimoire: the original copy of The Book of the Law.”

For his own interests, Stiyl brought the conversation to a close; it seemed like he did not intend to explain further. So, Index continued from where Stiyl left off, making a simple explanation.

The Book of the Law was rumored to be a grimoire written in codes that no one in the entire world could decipher, so the contents of the book were rather precious. Once someone could interpret it, they would be able to gain tremendous power. And now, there was finally a girl who had found a way to decode it.

But the Amakusa Church had stolen both the Book of the Law from the Roman Catholic Church and the girl who knew how to decode it, Orsola Aquinas.

The girl that Kamijou had met on the road was Orsola. She had escaped in the midst of the confusion in the battle between the Amakusa and the Roman Catholics. As for The Book of the Law, it was still missing, but it may have ended up in the hands of the Amakusa.

Amakusa…?

Kamijou felt that he heard that name before.

He decided to leave that aside for now, however, and asked,

“Nobody can interpret it? Not even Index?”

“No way. I tried, but it's different from ordinary types of codes.”

“But is this ‘grimoire that nobody can decode’ really that valuable? Since no one can decode it, can it possibly be just gibberish?”

“Maybe.”

Index replied honestly. By not refuting that claim, however, Index made herself seem like an adult trying to cajole children, like an expert not sharing her views with a layman.

Stiyl spat out the cigarette that he had finished smoking, put it out by stepping on it, and said,

“It’s said that the spells recorded in The Book of the Law are too powerful. Once used, the world supported by the Christian Church will be doomed. No matter how truthful that legend is, it's best if we can keep this book sealed forever. One sect even believes that whoever reads the book will be able to use the Angelic spell, a spell that far exceeds human limits, freely."

On hearing that, Kamijou froze up.

“An...gel…?”

“Hm? For an atheist like you, it might be hard to imagine what an angel looks like.”

Stiyl laughed. He was wrong, however.

Kamijou understood what an angel was. He still remembered what the angel with the so-called "God’s Power" had done. That night, the sky above the seaside had instantly been covered by a large vortex of magic spells. One single word from the angel would have been enough to turn half the Earth to ash.

Also, out of all the spells that the angel possessed, that had only been the tip of the iceberg.

Such a powerful magic could be controlled freely by humans?

“But…since no one's been able to decipher The Book of the Law, how would they know if it's just a bluff?”

Kamijou swallowed his saliva as he asked, disturbed. Index nodded her head like an innocent boy and replied,

“Mm. Touma, it's undeniable, however, that The Book of the Law has a tremendous amount of power. The person who wrote the Book of the Law was rumoured to be the most powerful magician ever; that man was even qualified to be recorded in the New Testament. He was active about seventy years ago, but the evolution of magicians during the past seventy years has surpassed the progress gained throughout the history of the past several thousand years. Of all the magicians in the world today, about 20% of them are his followers, and almost 50% of all magicians are affected by him to some extent.”

Since Index looked rather serious, Kamijou could not interrupt.

“I feel that the name The Book of the Law isn’t just for show. Even if the power of this book were to be even larger and scarier than that of legend, I wouldn’t be surprised.”

A group of nuns clad in black robes ran past them, making loud footsteps.

“Who…is that ‘he’ you're referring to?”

“Edward Alexander, also known as Crowley. He’s now buried in a cemetery in a certain town in Britain.”

Stiyl lit another cigarette and continued on,

“Anyway, according to history, this guy was the scum of humanity. During one of his trips, in order to carry out a magical experiment, he used his wife, who had been accompanying him around the world, as a medium to contact the guardian angel, Aiwass. And when his daughter Lilith died, he remained unmoved, continuing on with his research on theories of magick. In order to carry out the experiment, he even used a group of girls as old as his daughter as sacrifices…still, he did manage to define a so-called different world--a different but overlapping one similar to Heaven or Hell--and open new grounds in the field of magical rituals. Just by those points alone, his contributions cannot be denied.”

At that moment, the wind changed direction. Stiyl moved away, not wanting Index to breathe in the secondhand smoke. The secondhand smoke floated in Kamijou's direction instead, making him cough really badly. Seeing that, Stiyl revealed an evil smile, puffing out white smoke even harder, like a wild beast.

"Anyway, there are too many legends about this guy. It's the same with The Book of the Law; rumour has it that every time he had been in a situation where there had been no way out, he'd use The Book of the Law to carry out divinations, and decide on what to do next according to its contents. In other words, this was a grimoire that could decide the fate of the strongest magician in the world. It's almost equivalent to mastering all of modern Western history. So, one shouldn't view The Book of the Law too lightly."

Stiyl seemed rather irritated as he twisted his mouth.

The three Roman Catholic nuns who had run past them just now sprinted back again. One of the nuns smelled the tobacco smoke and subtly frowned. Her hands were holding a large 1-meter diameter wooden gear. It was either a weapon or something else entirely…

"If it's such a scary book, why not destroy it as soon as possible? Since it's a book, wouldn't burning it do the job?"

"A grimoire cannot be burned. Particularly with Originals, the very letters, words and sentences written in a grimoire convert to magic-like symbols by using energy leaking out from the Ley Lines as a power source like an automatic magic circle. So, the most we can do is seal it."

Index revealed a smile which seemed to have profound meaning, and said,

"If it's an original manuscript written from my memory, however, such a phenomenon won't occur."

"An 'automatic magic circle' has to be activated by the weak magical energy released by humans. The magic that an author possesses is like an engine's starter. A magician writing a grimoire will unconsciously input some magic into the paper along with the text. No matter what type of stationery or material is used, this phenomenon will always occur; thus, it's unavoidable. She's unable to use lifeforce to create magic, however, so this problem won't occur. She can be considered the ideal candidate as the keeper of the Magical Library…it seems

like everything was planned, and that really makes me feel unhappy."

“Oh…so that's how it is? Index?”

“Erm…hm…? What’s a starter? And what’s an engine?”

Stiyl’s explanation, however, puzzled Index.

After that, Stiyl impatiently explained to Index what an engine and a starter was--and for some reason, he looked rather happy.

Kamijou watched Stiyl and Index have their conversation, and his heart felt even heavier.

At the beginning, Kamijou had thought that this was not a big deal. Up until now, he had thought that rescuing the abducted Orsola would be enough.

But looking at things now, the situation was not that simple.

Kamijou had seen how capable an angel was. He had seen firsthand the "God’s Power" that Misha Kreutzev had used, the power that could turn half the Earth into ash.

And Kamijou understood this group known as "magicians". The magicians he had met before did not even know the meaning of the word "mercy". In order to get whatever they wanted, these people would give their all.

This group of magicians…if they were to use The Book of the Law and obtain the angel’s magic, what would they do?

Damn it…

Index had said that the original copy of a grimoire could not be burned,

Since it was like an automatic magic circle.

But Kamijou’s right hand had an inconceivable power.

If he were to use the power of his Imagine Breaker, maybe he could…

Oh, man! It looks like I can’t back out midway through!

Part 2

After giving orders in a foreign language, Agnese returned to where Kamijou and the rest were, her mini-skirt shaking about and her sandals, with their extremely thick soles, making a tapping sound like that of horseshoes.

This girl, who was younger than Index, made Kamijou feel rather perturbed. After seeing some inexplicably young nuns from the Anglican Church and the Russian Orthodox Church, Kamijou understood that there was no such thing as an age/authority hierarchy in the Magic world (Misha's inner and outer appearances were completely different, however). Moreover, this girl had been shouting and directing orders at several subordinates in a foreign language, not to mention given out those same orders to others through different methods of communication.

To Kamijou, though, the biggest problem was not the high position and great power that this little girl had, but rather her foreign language. At the moment, Kamijou thought, *Since I can't speak a foreign language, I'll have to have a showdown using the most hot-blooded high-speed body language instead!*

Agnese gazed into Kamijou's eyes, as if she was going to use a foreign language to engage in a foreign cultural exchange with him. Kamijou got ready as well, preparing to show off his most dramatic actions.

"Ah…erm…I really want to start explaining the current situation; may I ask if you guys are prepared?"

"…"

Such strange Japanese.

The surprise that Kamijou felt could not be described by pen or ink.

No matter how mindful someone was of their own unique culture and characteristics, they should not be speaking this sort of Japanese.

Seeing the Roman Catholic nun in front of him all frozen up, her legs shaking

and her face flushed red, Kamijou now understood that being nervous when talking to a foreigner for the first time was a universal quasi-truth.

“It…it makes me nervous to show my lousy Japanese in…in front of a Japanese person. Ah, can you speak any other languages? It’s best if we can speak some language that’s far away from our cultures, like Albanian or Berber…”

Since she was nervous, she spoke really fast. Index stood next to her and told her, in a foreign language, something like, "Calm down, calm down, take a deep breath." In another corner, Stiyl’s face was rather gray as he lowered his head, muttering, “Never mind, don’t mind me; I was just thinking of another person who speaks weird Japanese.”

Agnese placed her hand on her almost flat chest, took a few deep breaths, and just barely regained control over her emotions. Her two feet, clad in those sandals with 30-cm-thick soles, were staggering about like those of a drunk because of nervousness.

But in order to do her mission, she straightened herself up and said,

“I’m sorry. Now let me repeat myself: we should discuss the current situation and the actions we’re going to take later--AHHHHHHHHH!”

Agnese, who had ignored the fact that she stood on unstable platforms, tried to straighten her back and hold her head high, but fell backward before she managed to finish what she wanted to say. “WAAAHHH!!” she screamed as she swung her arms wildly. In her confusion, she grabbed onto Kamijou’s arm.

“Whoa!”

In the end, even Kamijou was pulled to the ground. The sudden action made him unable to react in time to protect himself, and his entire body fell flat onto the asphalt. It hurt so much that he wanted to writhe on the floor. Suddenly, Kamijou realized that there was a piece of floating fabric covering his head.

It was Agnese’s skirt.

Kamijou looked up, and several centimeters in front of him was an entirely delightful scene of paradise.

“WAAAAA...AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!!!!”

Panicking, Kamijou tried to move his head away. At the same moment, Agnese also sensed something amiss; gave a loud, piercing “AHHHHHH!!!”; and pressed her skirt down tightly with both hands. Of course, it was a defensive action under a desperate situation, but such an action only caused Kamijou’s head to be stuck under her skirt, making him unable to move.

Kamijou heard Index shouting at him as his entire range of vision was blocked by Agnese's skirt and thighs.

“Tou…Tou-Tou-Tou-Tou-Touma! This sort of prank is really too much!”

“Please don’t get too aroused while we’re doing a mission; now hurry and stand up.”

Stiyl raised his leg to his waist before kicking Kamijou, finally freeing him from the terrifying prison formed from Agnese’s skirt and thighs. Stiyl seemed to have enjoyed the kick a little too much, however, and it seemed that he had felt compelled to do that after hearing Index cry out.

Having been kicked, Kamijou coughed as he shook his head.

At that moment, Kamijou and Agnese, who had fallen onto the asphalt, stared at each other. Agnese was trembling all over, her face flushed red, and tears were forming in her eyes. When Kamijou saw that, he became desperately pale.

“Sor…sorry…”

“Never…never mind…I fell down myself. Maybe it was because I was too nervous that I lost my balance…Um, can you stand up?”

Agnese used her feet, with those 30-cm-thick-soled sandals, to support herself, and stood up steadily. She then stretched her hand out to Kamijou, who was lying on the ground. Kamijou looked like he had just seen a glimmer of light in the midst of some dark clouds and reached his hand out, grabbing Agnese’s hand. Index was rather unhappy with how the whole scene went.

After calming down, Agnese’s body was still rather stiff, but she was no longer nervous when she spoke.

“Okay, now I’ll start on The Book of the Law, Orsola Aquinas, the Amakusa’s actions, and our future course of action.”

Maybe it was because she was afraid to fall down again, but Agnese, who was trembling terribly, could not help but stretch her hand out again, wanting to hold onto Kamijou’s shirt--but she stopped halfway through. No matter what, grabbing onto a boy whom she was unfamiliar with was inappropriate, and also, the boy had just clearly seen quite a scenery under her skirt. Agnese groped the air before gently grasping onto a corner of Index’s nun's habit.

“Right now, we can confirm that Orsola Aquinas has fallen into the hands of the Amakusa. As for The Book of the Law, I’m afraid that they may have taken that as well. The enemy we’re facing, the Amakusa Church, probably has slightly less than fifty people. They used the sewer to escape earlier, but it’s unlikely that they’ll stay there throughout the night.”

“In other words, there’s not even a single clear clue?”

Index asked. The way Agnese was pinning herself close to her seemed to be making her uncomfortable.

“Yes. Although we tried to use some of the remaining traces of magic to find out the Amakusa’s whereabouts, we weren't successful. As expected of the Amakusa Church, a sect that specializes in enhancing stealth.”

Agnese’s body swayed as she pointed to the equilateral triangle-shaped hole.

“But we have another group setting up a perimeter. Maybe we might get something.”

“A perimeter…how large is it, anyway?”

Kamijou tilted his head as he asked. Index looked at him, her eyes seemingly telling him to save her by pulling away Agnese. He pretended to not notice.

“With this place as the center, the perimeter has a radius of about ten kilometers, enclosing 132 roads and forty-three sewers. With our manpower, setting such a perimeter isn’t a difficult thing,” Agnese said as she clung onto Index. “Anyway, once the Amakusa try to bring The Book of the Law and Orsola Aquinas back to their base, they'll be detected by our network. According to the information we've gathered, the Amakusa's base is located in Kyushu…though, unfortunately, we’re unable to confirm the accuracy of that report. If they aren't trying to get past us, but are asking Orsola the way to decode The Book of the Law on the spot instead, the situation will be even tougher to handle.”

“You don’t have to worry about that. I believe that Orsola isn't so stupid that she's unable to resist the magic spells that allow people to read minds. If they were to try and use force, this place wouldn’t be ideal for them.”

Stiyl blew out some white smoke and continued,

“The number of nearby enemies is too large for them, so they can’t carry out their work peacefully. Interrogating Orsola, getting the method to decode The Book of the Law, and then printing out manuals on how to decode it; all that work can't be completed in one day. If they want to break through her heart’s defence and force her to sell out information without pushing her toward suicide, the best method of interrogation without directly touching her would be the **Long Run**[6] or the **Special Spacy**;[7] that would take at least a week, however. Not letting her sleep for one or two days isn’t even a form of interrogation. They'll only make her sanity begin to deteriorate by forcing her to stay awake for at least 120 hours.”

Stiyl said that nonchalantly, but Kamijou got goosebumps just from hearing it.

Putting this expert in witch hunting and religious trials aside, Kamijou was

afraid of what Orsola's kidnappers would do to her. Also, from what he had heard from Agnese, there were almost fifty members of the Amakusa.

The Amakusa Church.

At that point, however, Kamijou thought of something; he had heard Kanzaki Kaori and Tsuchimikado Motoharu mention this "Amakusa" group before. What he had heard was that Kanzaki had originally been the leader of that group, and had left them in order to protect them.

In the past, Kanzaki had really wanted to protect this group of people--but now they dared to do this sort of thing for their own selfish purposes?

That shouldn't be the case…

Don't tell me that these guys have changed?

After Kanzaki Kaori had left them, had these guys whom she had been protecting fallen?

"What's wrong, Touma?"

Index asked suspiciously, tilting her head to one side, knocking into Agnese, who was clinging onto her.

"Nothing. Oh, yeah, what do we do now? Those guys from the Amakusa will be immediately found by the perimeter, right?"

"Ah, yeah, that's right."

Agnese still seemed to be nervous, as her entire face was almost touching Index's. She continued,

"Basically, you guys just need to be the backup…there's still some danger of them using the spells from The Book of the Law, however, even though the possibly may be small, so it'd best if an expert of the grimoire were to settle this __"

"Ahhhh! This is unbearable! It's really hot!"

Index swung her arms around. After a while, she said to Kamijou,

“Will the Amakusa be found that easily, though? Touma?”

“If you ask me, then who can I ask? Speaking of which, if forty to fifty guys of a mysterious organization were to walk onto the streets, wouldn't it be rather striking?”

“Touma, didn't you know that the Amakusa don't have a fixed attire? They’re a group of people highly specialised in hiding their whereabouts and covering their own tracks. Even if they were to walk onto the streets, outsiders wouldn't see them as different from ordinary folks.”

“…”

“What’s wrong, Touma? Why are you staring at me so suspiciously?”

“Nothing,” Kamijou replied. None of the people around him were dressed normally. What Index had said about them not being different from ordinary folks did not seem convincing to him.

“Anyway, the Amakusa specialise in hiding and escaping. After stealing The Book of the Law and kidnapping Orsola Aquinas, they’ll expect the Roman Catholic Church to hit back full force. If this was a planned operation, then they might have rehearsed this part.”

Agnese, who was still clinging onto Index, looked puzzled as she said,

“But…but even then, no matter what, they can’t possibly escape our perimeter…”

“It’s possible. There’s a type of magic for that.”

Index replied without hesitation. At that, Agnese sucked in a deep breath.

“There's a spell that can only be used in Japan. Basically speaking, there are special places called ‘portals’ all over Japan. One can use this ‘map magic’ to travel from ‘portal’ to ‘portal’.”

“Are you talking about the **Great Japanese Coastal Map** that Ino Tadataka

created?”

Stiyl seemed to have thought of something, giving an ugly expression as he muttered.

Kamijou was extremely confused now. He asked,

“Who’s this Ino Tadataka? Is he another famous magician?”

Once that question was asked, everyone turned and gazed at Kamijou coldly.

“Erm, Touma, he was the person to create the first map of Japan using modern surveying techniques. It’s even recorded in ordinary history timelines.”

“Seems like you have no clue at all about history. I bet you’ve even forgotten who the previous five prime ministers were?”

“…even an Italian like me knows.”

Kamijou, completely embarrassed now, was bombarded and pulverized by the voices around him.

“Anyway, this Japanese map created in the Edo period has a special structure. Everyone should be clear about the **Idol Theory**, right?[8] That's, except for… Touma.”

There were supposed to be only a few people who understood that magical term, but it seemed to be common knowledge among all the people around him. Kamijou felt that he was in a situation where he was struggling alone.

“For Touma’s sake, I’ll give a brief explanation. The Idol Theory is a form of basic knowledge that allows us to put the power of God and angels to good use. According to this theory, if one were to build a duplicate of the cross on which Christ was crucified and put it on the roof of a church, some of the holy power from those actual cross-wielders will be replicated. The power of the duplicate is not even 0.000000000001% of the original's--even the greatest legendary duplicate, Holy Manger, contains only a small fraction of that power--but if someone obtained even 1% of the original's power, they could match even the Twelve Apostles.”

All over the world, from the ones on churches to the ones hanging on nuns' necks, there were a lot of crosses. But even with the power split away into so many duplicates, the power of the original was almost limitless. *Maybe it's like how the sun provides solar power for electricity,* Kamijou guessed wildly.

"And, according to our hypothesis, this Idol Theory can be reversed; in other words, not only will the original cause some effect on the Idol, but also vice-versa."

"Hypothesis…? Do you mean that it's still unconfirmed?"

"There are some exceptions that cannot be explained, so right now, it's just a hypothesis. But using this hypothesis, people have claimed that they'll receive divine judgement if they treat the Bible badly; that's not unreasonable, however. In the Bible, there are many instances where several idols from different anti-Christian Greek religions were struck down and destroyed by lightning. Stepping on Fumie in Japan was a method designed to affect the original badly by stepping on the duplicate." [9]

Index frowned as she said that. As a treasure house of knowledge, she did not seem to like saying uncertain words like "what if" or "according".

"Ino Tadataka used the Idol Theory in the opposite manner. He understood that the real one and the idol would affect each other, so he plotted 47 'portals' on the Great Japanese Coastal Map that originally didn't exist on the Japanese islands. Thus, these entrances that allow people to come and go as they please appeared in modern Japan."

Kamijou's mind tried hard to arrange this extremely strange information Index had told him.

The Japanese islands and the intricate map of Japan that the guy called Ino Tadataka had made could actually affect each other. Once one randomly drew a teleportation entrance on that map, such an entrance would appear on that real island as well.

In other words, everything that they drew on the map would become real?

"Hey, that's too scary, isn't it? If one were to use an eraser to erase that map, wouldn't every Japanese person and city disappear as well?"

“It’s not like that, Touma. Listen to me: the condition for being an idol is being a duplicate; as long as there’s even a slight difference in the levels of magic used between the idol and the original, the idol will lose its purpose. So, the Idol Theory can’t be used to solve everything. Once the original image is changed, the theory cannot be used.”

Index solemnly explained. There had been a group of magicians in the past who had tried to use a stone sculpture that looked like the Son of God to control the Son of God in the heavens, but it ended up in failure.

“Looking at it another way, this was where Ino Tadakata was really impressive. He added some things to the duplicates that the original itself didn't have, and yet he was still able to maintain a perfect balance between the duplicates and the original. In the entire history of Magic, he was the only one who managed to accomplish that. If he were a sculptor, he might even have been able to control the Son of God or an angel…though, of course, just being able to manipulate the map of Japan was pretty impressive.”

“…Do the Amakusa know how to use this magic that employs the Japanese map?”

“The answer should be affirmative. Ino Tadakata, who lived in the Edo period, was very interested in the cultures of other countries. His clan even intended to sell the Great Japanese Coastal Map to Siebold. [10] When Christians were persecuted, he might have obtained some knowledge through the Dutch. [11] If he had met the Amakusa secretly in the interest of knowledge, it wouldn’t be strange.”

Putting aside the minor details, the Amakusa basically had a magic spell that allowed them to teleport themselves all over Japan. So, breaking through the perimeter would be easy work for them.

After hearing Index’s explanation, Agnese was stunned.

Kamijou organized the information that he had just heard and said,

“Then, what do we do? The Amakusa might have escaped through a portal, right? Since there are a limited number of portals, shouldn't we just check all of those in one go?”

“It’s impossible. Actually, people later said that they could only find 23 of the portals on the Great Japanese Coastal Map. But a manual from the time of when black ships arrived[12] clearly stated that there were 47 portals.”

The location of more than half of the portals could not be identified.

Thus, they could not determine the whereabouts of the Amakusa.

“Besides using the special teleportation magic of the Great Japanese Coastal Map, the base of the Amakusa is famous for being a well-hidden secret. That's understandable, since outsiders can't even determine their escape routes. Just now, Agnese said that their main base was reported to be in Kyushu, but it's almost impossible to verify that. There are too many places that are suspected to be their main base. As for where the real one actually is, nobody knows. These reports could be all false, or those places could all have the capacity to be a main base.”

Agnese looked pale.

Her hands, which had been clinging onto Index’s body, were now grabbing Index’s shoulders. She exclaimed,

“Then…what should we do? Since you knew about this, why didn’t you tell me? We can’t determine the location of the portal, and we can’t find their main base! In this situation, if they were to get into the portal, it’d be all over! If we take action before they enter the portal, there’s still a chance that we can intercept them! Why do you still look so calm?”

“Because there’s no need to panic.”

Index calmly replied. When Agnese heard that, she was stunned.

“The Great Japanese Coastal Map is measured and mapped out using the location of the stars. So, the location of the stars is extremely important, as that's the condition for using this special magic. Basically, there’s a limited time frame; if the time isn’t right, the special teleportation magic cannot be used.”

Index gazed at the stars, her silver hair swaying in the air.

“Judging by the location of the stars right now…the time now is approximately

7:30 PM. The only time in which they can use the special teleportation magic is a short period after the date changes, which means that there's around four and a half hours to go. Also, the location of the portal which they can use to teleport is fixed. Among the 23 portals that the descendants could find, only one is located within our vicinity…of course, they might use other portals that we don't know of," Index said rather confidently.

Every time this kind of situation occurred, Kamijou felt that he and Index were not really living in the same world.

"Where will that portal appear?"

"Touma, do you have that thing that can allow us to see a map? Lend it to me, lend it to me."

Kamijou thought, *She must be referring to the GPS function,* and handed her his phone. Index accepted the phone, but she looked like she did not know what to do with it, so Kamijou had to use it for her. Index continued to give him directions like "a bit right" or "move down a bit", and finally pointed her slender white finger to a point on the map.

"It's here."

Part 3

"Our scouts have reported two suspicious characters there. They're likely from the Amakusa, but we haven't tipped them off yet."

After hearing Index's explanation a while ago, Agnese had given the orders, and within 15 minutes, she had gotten a report from her subordinates.

It's really easy to do things when there are so many people, Kamijou thought. The Angel Fall incident had been a whole lot more troublesome, even though this situation was just as chaotic.

“There’s no sign of the main force of the Amakusa, The Book of the Law, or Orsola, however.”

“Of course not. It'd be very obvious if they were all there at the same time. And it’s still ‘business mode’ over there.”

Although Kamijou did not know what time it was exactly, he guessed it was not even 8 PM right now.

If the Amakusa wanted to use the map magic created by Ino Tadataka to escape, they had to head toward the portal's location. Kamijou and the rest intended to attack the Amakusa before they could reach the portal and take back The Book of the Law and Orsola.

“Since they might use other portals that we do not know of, or not use any special teleportation magic at all, I can’t gather all my people into one group before we find the main force of the Amakusa. If we don’t maintain the perimeter and search for them within the area, we’ll probably let them escape. That place is where they’re most likely to appear, though." Agnese said worriedly.

Index did not seem to mind and said,

“You’ve done the right thing. Besides, even I don’t have any concrete evidence.”

“Because of those reasons, the number of people that can be deployed is only 74, including me. Right now, we’re readying our weapons and equipment. With that amount of manpower, if we meet the main force of the Amakusa, we won't have a sure chance of winning. I'm sorry, but you guys will have to take care of yourselves.”

Up until now, there had only been less than 50 people in the Amakusa, and yet they had been able to fight it out against the Roman Catholics for such a long time. So, Agnese was not just saying that to be humble.

Stiyl lit another cigarette and said,

“You don’t have to worry; we're sorry that there’s been no notice from the Knights who had agreed to arrive. So we won’t burden you guys. Oh, yeah, how long will it take for the preparations to be complete before we leave?”

“Besides the weapons and equipment, we still need to bless everyone here by pouring holy water and reading Bible scriptures…” Agnese thought for a while before saying, “Around 3 hours…we’ll likely finish by 11 PM at the latest.”

“If we count the time it takes for us to travel...that means that we only have 30 minutes to settle this? Ah, well; at least we may end up arriving there before the Amakusa’s main force; so far, we’ve just been waiting around aimlessly.”

Just like that, the time of the operation was set to 11 PM.

Agnese clapped twice, and after giving orders in a foreign language, all the nuns in black went into action. The 74-strong group of nuns split into smaller groups of 2 to 4 people. Each group then proceeded to do its own job.

For someone who was used to seeing lone striders like Stiyl, Tsuchimikado and Kanzaki--or to put it crudely, magicians who were stubborn and lonely--the orderliness of the Roman Catholics surprised Kamijou.

Agnese and the nuns participating in the "Retrieval of The Book of the Law and Orsola Operation" went into their preparations for war, and those who had already finished their own preparations took turns to eat or sleep. Kamijou was intrigued, not understanding how these people could still sleep before a battle. But Agnese told him that, once the battle was at a stalemate, nobody would even dare wish for a good nap on a comfy bed, so they could only dare rest up for 10 to 20 minutes to replenish their energy. To the nuns, this was already basic knowledge.

Seems like this is a specialized group of people who are really used to fighting for a long time.

Kamijou thought, his mind running wildly.

Since Kamijou, Index, and Stiyl had nothing else to do, they had time to enjoy their dinner and take a little nap. Kamijou thought,

Maybe this is the hospitality that Agnese shows to her guests.

Remarkably, they had to take their dinner and sleep inside a tent. This was supposed to be the capital of Japan, and yet they were setting up their own tent. That was really unexpected. Come to think of it, if these 70+ people wearing

such strange clothes and preparing for war were to gather in a multi-chain restaurant or a hotel, then that would be an even more amazing sight.

Now that I think about it, we're starting at 11…will I be able to make it school tomorrow? AH! Wait! The due date for submitting the summer holiday homework should be approaching soon, right?

Kamijou hastily looked toward the direction of Academy City, not knowing what to do.

Due to several complicated reasons, Kamijou had not completed his summer homework. So, Komoe-sensei had given Kamijou a "punishment assignment"--which she had made specially for Kamijou--and the last day to submit this assignment was tomorrow.

AHHHHHHHH! Kamijou turned gray as he screamed within his heart.

To be honest, Kamijou had thought that he could complete it. Up until now, the hard-working Kamijou had to block Index's "Play with me!" attacks and fend off the calico cat, Sphinx's, "Give me food!" attacks in order to do his homework. So, unfortunately, his abilities alone had not been enough. But yesterday, he had begged Misaka Mikoto to teach him how to solve those questions, and although Mikoto had grumbled, she had still stayed with Kamijou for many hours; thus, the rate at which he had been solving those questions had gone up, and there had been hope that he would be able to complete it today.

But now, that bubble of hope had burst.

Oh man! Oh man! I'll be scolded! What to do? What am I going to do? It's not just Komoe-sensei--even Mikoto will be angry! Ahhhhhh! I haven't said this for quite a while, but…such misfortune!

Kamijou's entire body trembled as he tilted his head slightly upward, looking up at the night sky. He continued to tell himself that the transparent liquid flowing down from the corners of his eyes was just sweat.

Kamijou dejectedly walked towards a corner of the campsite, got a piece of bread and a bowl of soup--the latter of which he could not identify--and ate as he looked around.

Small semi-circular tents were set up everywhere in the abandoned parking lot of the Twilight Theatre. Yet, no matter what anyone thought, there was no way this area could accommodate everyone. It seemed like some of them would be sleeping inside the building. Besides, all the Roman Catholic nuns were be busy preparing, so it was likely that more than half of them would not have time to sleep.

Seeing these people being so busy, Kamijou felt embarrassed and did not dare sleep. According to Stiyl, however, people who had nothing to do and kept moving around would only cause them more trouble.

Come to think of it, wouldn't the police notice a group of people living in a dump? Or did they use something like a spell that turns away passersby?

Kamijou went from the campsite to his own tent, snuggled his body under the futon, and thought about all these things. Stiyl was sleeping just beside him, and Index seemed to be sleeping in another tent. In order to protect Index, Stiyl had actually intended to sleep with Index in the same tent, but that idea was rejected. Later, Kamijou had seen a disappointed Stiyl mutter to himself, "If Kanzaki, who is of the same gender, were around, it'd have been alright..." as he placed rune cards near her tent. It was said that *Innocentius* became stronger the more rune cards there were, and Stiyl appeared to be grumbling because there was a limited amount of space inside the small tent where he could stick them.

Unable to sleep, Kamijou rolled around in the tent. It was not because he was not tired or overly nervous because of the upcoming battle, but because he could not sleep on his own when there were so many people busy working outside. Even more, once he thought about how they were dressed, he could only think about Orsola, who was dressed in the same nun's habit.

"…I should just go help them."

As Kamijou got out from under the futon, Stiyl's irritated voice rang out beside him.

"Do whatever suits you, but please don't use your mysterious right hand to destroy their artifacts...If they're broken, you'll have to pay for them yourself; it'll be none of the Anglican Church's business."

After listening to that seemingly sarcastic reminder, Kamijou got out of the tent.

The summer night was extremely hot. The nuns ran around, busy doing their own things. Some of them carried a lot of silver candlesticks; some of them, stacks of old Bibles; and some of them, large wooden wheels that seemed to be used for horse carriages. Kamijou wondered, *What use do those things have?*

Is there something that I can help with…Eh?

Kamijou suddenly realized that something was strange, and stopped. Beside the tent he had just walked out from, the zipper to the entrance of Index's rune-card-filled tent was open, and there was no one inside.

Now where did she run off to--WA!

Seeing that Index's tent was empty, Kamijou moved toward it--and noticed that the feeling of ground below his feet was gone. Actually, he got careless, and had already stepped into the equilateral triangular hole made by the Amakusa.

Oh, no…! I'm about to fall in--!

"Swish!"

Before Kamijou could fall entirely into the sewer, a nun grabbed Kamijou's waving hand in the nick of time. The nun pulled Kamijou out and started telling him off in a foreign language, but Kamijou did not understand what she was saying.

Oh, man, have I already started giving them trouble?

A dejected Kamijou turned around again to look at the triangular hole which he had nearly fallen into, and observed it carefully.

The Amakusa had been lurking in the sewers since a while ago, and had launched a sneak attack from below. Up until now, Kamijou had thought that this place could be considered the Roman Catholics' base, and no matter how one moved around, there should not be any danger.

Thinking about it carefully, though, danger could still be nearby. The Amakusa could have set up something that could destroy the Roman Catholic command base before they had escaped, making their escape a lot easier.

Even if they were to launch a stealth attack, they wouldn't attack a layman like me, right? No matter how hard I think, they'd choose an important place to attack, such as the command post.

The problem was that Kamijou was unable to distinguish the important tents from the unimportant ones. He saw one in front of him that was a lot bigger than the rest. Kamijou casually thought, *That tent looks like the most likely to be attacked.*

Suddenly, an extremely loud crashing sound came from within that large tent.

Then, a girl's scream was heard.

"…!?"

Kamijou felt the water content in his throat evaporating. Those wild thoughts that he had a while ago now came running back into his mind.

The Amakusa could launch a direct attack from below.

The more important the tent was to Agnese and the rest, the more likely it would be attacked.

No way; don't tell me it came true…

"Damn it!"

Luckily, that tent was rather close to Kamijou. He clenched his fist as hard as stone and rushed forward. Although there were many nuns around, they were too shocked by this unexpected situation to respond. Kamijou ran to the entrance of the tent and pulled the zipper.

"Amakusa!"

Just as Kamijou shouted, a heavy object suddenly flew out of the tent and crashed into Kamijou's belly. It was a heavy and warm object that brought with it some humidity.

WAAAHHH…!

An indescribable feeling flowed through Kamijou's entire body, his fine hairs standing still. Kamijou quickly raised his fist and was about to swing it down…

Before realizing that it was Agnese Sanctis, now entirely naked, who was clinging to his waist.

"…Eh?"

A loud voice boomed inside Kamijou's head, and then his mind went blank.

Agnese, who was completely naked, was wet, her skin dripping and moist. White steam continued to rise from her slightly pink and soft skin, and while clinging onto Kamijou, she continued to tremble. She buried her face into Kamijou's stomach, shutting her eyes and muttering some foreign language. It seemed like she was confused.

Kamijou did not understand a single thing that Agnese was saying. Agnese pointed her finger at something, so Kamijou turned to look in that direction.

A small slug was in one corner of the large tent.

Agnese pointed to that small slug while speaking in that foreign language that no one could understand.

"Wait…wait, wait, Agnese! Let me go first, and put on some clothes! Also, I can only understand Japanese!"

Kamijou blushed as he shouted. Once Agnese heard that, her trembling stopped.

She lifted her head in fear.

And saw Kamijou.

The next moment…

Agnese fainted, and fell backwards.

WAH!

The ground was hard asphalt. Kamijou quickly grabbed Agnese, who was about to hit the ground. An amazing sensation passed through Kamijou's shirt, making

him feel strange. Agnese was a lot slimmer than Index overall, so she was a bit skinny, but that made her soft parts more pronounced.

Ugh…!?

Kamijou, who was still hugging Agnese, looked up, and trembled.

Actually, there was a large golden basin in the middle of the tent, and above it, hanging from the roof, was a metal can. Attached to the bottom of the metal can was something that looked like a shower nozzle, and a tap above it. It seemed like this was a simple set-up for a shower, and by turning the tap, hot water from the metal can would flow out from the nozzle. And right now, hot water was flowing out of it.

Within that large, golden basin in the middle of the tent, drenched in hot water, was a silver-haired, emerald-eyed nun.

“…Touma.”

The nun spoke in a very low voice. Of course she was not wearing anything. Whether it was her wet hair, her flat chest, or her little belly button that was now filled with water, they were all in full view. Her skin was originally white, but after she had washed it with hot water, it was rather reddish.

“Wait… wait, wait, wait a minute! I thought that the Amakusa attacked, and was worried, so I rushed in, so I hope you can carefully re-evaluate this…”

“Sniff—”

“...? 'Sniff?'”

Startled, Kamijou observed Index’s every movement.

“—Sniff sniff… Sniff sniff…”

SHE…SHE-SHE-SHE-SHE-SHE-SHE-SHE’S CRYING!?

This completely unexpected situation made Kamijou tremble mysteriously. Large teardrops continued to flow from the corners of Index’s eyes, and she used her hands to wipe them away.

Suddenly, Kamijou found many people looking at him coldly.

Over 100 nuns were labeling Kamijou as "a guy who would make a young and naked girl cry--and even our superior is naked and has fainted beside him".

Kamijou went pale.

“Wait…please…please calm down, Index-hime! This isn’t like you! You aren’t like this normally! See, Kamijou’s head is here, right? Come bite it, quickly, bite it… Eh? Wait…wait! Why do you look so serious all of a sudden? I…I’m just joking! Please don’t give me that expression, like you’re going to chew on a thick slab of beef--WAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!”

“Didn’t I tell you not to cause them trouble? Hm? Why are you holding your head and crying?”

Stiyl, who was lying inside the tent, coldly asked Kamijou, who was bare able to drag his body back into the tent. As the tent’s entrance was zipped up, Stiyl figured out that there had been a commotion, but he did not know that it had something to do with Index. If he were to know about it, the next scene would probably be one where a crazed priest wielding a flame sword chased after Kamijou. Kamijou was told by Agnese, who had voiced her displeasure, “We’re about to discuss battle tactics; please LEAVE.” Of course he did not want to cause anymore trouble.

Kamijou stroked his scalp and snuggled into his futon. As long as he could get some time, whether it was five minutes or ten minutes, he should quickly rest and get some sleep. It was said that this was common knowledge for all magicians. Kamijou could not sleep before the pain went away, though.

“Hey, Stiyl.”

“What? I’m rather annoyed right now. If there’s anything, we can talk later.”

“I'd like to ask you something.”

“Their ability to handle danger is so lousy. So what if it’s The Book of the Law? They’re already panicking like this over just a grimoire. This is really unthinkable. Compared to this, that girl who possesses 103,000 grimoires in her brain... Who knows how many magicians have coveted her…”

“Which girl do you like?”

“EH?”

Hearing Kamijou ask that question, Stiyl sucked in a breath of cold air, his body trembling slightly.

During nights in training or camp, that question would always be raised. That seemed to be something unique only to Japan.

“Answer quickly; I still have other questions to ask.”

“The lady I respect is Elizabeth the First, and the lady I admire is St. Martha; it’s said that she subdued a dragon with a prayer full of love and compassion, and that's really admirable. Any other questions?”

“The Amakusa Church...isn’t that the organization which Kanzaki was serving?”

“…”

Stiyl squinted his eyes, and remained silent. He stretched his hand, wanting to get a cigarette, but realized that smoking while lying on the ground was not good, and pulled his hand back.

“Who told you? Kanzaki most likely wouldn’t say where she’s from. Did Tsuchimikado tell you?”

“Yeah. It was when you became the owner of the seaside resort.” [13]

Stiyl looked like he did not understand. Kamijou did not bother explaining and continued,

“In other words, the Amakusas are Kanzaki’s compatriots, right?”

Kamijou paused at this point, obviously looking perplexed. “…Should we continue to take action? Like that time against the Misawa Cram School?”

Kamijou and Stiyl had once fought on the same side before.

That battle could only be described as appalling. Many people had been injured, and some had even lost their lives. From that moment on, Kamijou had vaguely understood what a battle between different magical organizations was all about. In the real magical world, not a single hint of innocence was allowed. Thus, magic specialists like Index and Stiyl were born.

But,

Since these people knew how cruel a battle between magicians was, would that not create a sense of compassion?

“Of course.”

Stiyl answered without hesitation, however.

“Isn’t it obvious? I’ll do anything to protect that kid. Even if I’m not ordered by my superiors to do so, or even ordered not to, it’s the same to me. I can kill anyone, whether it’s burning them alive, or burning their corpses to ash--whether it’s in front of that kid or somewhere where she can’t see me,” Stiyl said in a self-depreciative manner. “Don’t get the wrong idea, Kamijou Touma. That I’m lying right here, right now...it’s all for that kid. Once you have no more value to that young child, I’ll burn you to a crisp anytime.”

“…”

Kamijou could not help but swallow his saliva.

This was the sole conviction that Stiyl Magnus had.

Being a member of the Anglican Church, becoming an extremely strong battle magician, being ordered to bring back The Book of the Law and Orsola...all his actions were based on this conviction.

“A long time ago, I swore, '—Sleep well; even if you forget everything, I’ll remember it forever. I’ll live for you, and die for you.'”

That made Kamijou tremble.

But Stiyl's words were filled with passion.

Kamijou pondered carefully on how to answer.

If he was not careful, it would be disrespectful to Stiyl.

"But even so, why must you get Index involved in this?"

"The one who planned this wasn't me. If possible, I would not have gotten her involved either."

Stiyl said calmly.

"But I can't settle this on my own. If I do, that child will be seen as 'useless' by my superiors. As of right now, if we can't make them see the value that Index has, it's likely that she'll be brought back to London. Right now, to her, not being able to live in Academy City would be much more painful than anything else."

Stiyl's voice was filled with frustration and reluctance.

They were both members of the Anglican Church. As for Stiyl, he must be hoping to bring Index back to Britain.

But Stiyl Magnus replied with such reluctance.

"Let's sleep; there's only 2 hours left before the operation starts. We'll get nightmares if we continue talking."

After saying that, the rune spellcaster shut his mouth and eyes.

In a few hours, it was going to be a battle for keeps. In such an intense atmosphere, Kamijou had thought that he would not be able to sleep, and he did not expect himself to, after getting under his blanket and closing his eyes. Maybe it was because the preparations for Daihaseisai had taken more out of him than he had expected, but Kamijou soon fell asleep.

Uh...ah...?

Sensing something heavy pressing against him, Kamijou woke up. At that moment, a message inside Kamijou told him: something as heavy as a human was pressing on him, the blanket had risen for some reason, and his body felt some warm and soft skin.

In addition, there was subtle breathing coming from under the blanket.

Wai—Wait, wait…oh, no, no way! Oh, man, I forgot that the tent doesn't have a lock!

In his dormitory, Kamijou would normally hide inside the bathroom, lock the door, and sleep inside the dry bathtub. The reason was simple: if he did not do this, Index would snuggle into Kamijou's futon while she was still dazed and sleepy. Because of that, Kamijou was grateful that the bathtub was large enough for him.

Besides this sin—-Index snuggling into his futon—-which would cause a severe adverse emotional impact on the young and healthy Kamijou Touma, the more important thing right now was that Stiyl slept beside him--and he had been rather stern when he gave that relentless speech before he slept. If this continued, Kamijou would likely die in Stiyl's hands later.

Drenched in sweat, Kamijou suddenly noticed that the tender flesh of the girl was constantly rubbing against him.

The rubbing of different body parts together made Kamijou's heart stop beating.

…Wooo…whoooaaa! Wait a second, wait a second! Index! Coming from the side is enough, but isn't it too much to press onto my body!?

Kamijou hastily whispered--or so Kamijou thought, but it was actually very loud--voicing his objection.

"Hm…Touma, what are you saying…?"

Suddenly, a familiar voice came from the entrance of the tent; it was Index, half-asleep and dazed and her eyes half-open as she unzipped the entrance to the tent, preparing to enter Kamijou's futon.

“Eh?” A large question mark appeared inside Kamijou’s head.

“Umum… Papa…Io non posso mangiare alcuno più qualsiasi più lungo…”

The face that was revealed from inside the futon was that of Agnese Sanctis.

Agnese, who was still sleeping soundly, did not realize that she was less than 5 cm away from Kamijou’s lips.

No way...Another person who snuggles into other people’s futons when she’s sleepy and dazed? Didn’t this girl order me to leave their bathing area a while ago?

Kamijou panicked as he pulled away from the approaching pair of peach-like lips. He then tried to crawl away while under Agnese’s body. The moment Kamijou tugged at the futon, however, it was lifted open.

“Wa!”

Kamijou was stunned. Agnese, whose entire body was revealed from within the futon, wore only a white laced bra and a pair of panties with small bow ties on both sides. Maybe she was used to sleeping like this, as her nun's habit was neatly stacked and placed in one corner of the tent.

Stunned, Index stared at Kamijou and Agnese.

“…‘Papa’?”

“Wait! Index, I’ve no idea what’s going on! I don’t have an inkling of why I'm being called that by a young girl!”

Because of the previous incident involving Agnese, which ended up with him having bite marks all over his head, Kamijou was frightened, and trembled, trying to explain his actions. Index observed Kamijou’s frightened expression closely, and said,

“Whoa…this…should probably be a dream…”

“Eh?”

“Um, even if it’s Touma, he can’t possibly have so little integrity. So, this must be a dream. Mm-hmm.”

“Yeah…yes, yes! It’s a dream, it’s a dream! How can a real man like Kamijou Touma, who’ll forever treat nuns nicely, do such a shameless thing!?”

Kamijou continued to misguide Index, who was sleepy, like a hypnotist.

“Hm, ya, since it’s a dream, there should be no problem. It’s alright no matter how hard I bite. Since it’s a dream, it’s alright if I take this opportunity to vent all my daily dissatisfaction. Mm-hmm.”

“EH? AH…what? Wait, Index! You’re wrong! This is a real and authentic…”

Kamijou frantically tried to correct himself, but it was too late. Index bit his head with all her strength. The scream of the healthy high school boy, Kamijou Touma, made Agnese, clad only in her underwear and lying beside him, wake up in shock. As for Stiyl Magnus who was sleeping in the same tent and was annoyed, he simply took a glance at Kamijou and the rest, turned over to the other side, and continued his sleep.

Part 4

11 PM. It was nighttime now.

The substitute Supreme Pontiff, Tatemiya Saiji, together with 47 members of the main force, were gathered around the portal of the special teleportation magic, the **Miniature Pilgrimage**.

The place was not some mysterious forest or mountain, however; they were at a large snack-themed amusement park called **Parallel Sweets Park**.

This snack-themed amusement park had been built and financed by 4 large snack manufacturers, and it was as large as an electrical plant. Inside the park were 75 stores from 38 different countries. Throughout the park were several donut-like

watercourses, linked to each other like the 5 rings on the Olympic logo. Outside the watercourses, there stood several snack shops similar to those of hawkers, but their products were top-quality. Inside of the circular watercourses was a square where many snack manufacturers could showcase their products and carry out activities. As it was almost the end of summer, it seemed like they were promoting ice products and frozen desserts.

Although the locations of the portals that Ino Tadataka had set did not change, the city developed and changed everyday. Some portals were located within certain rooms in certain condominiums, or even a large vault in a certain bank; it was now impossible to use those for teleportation. In comparison, this portal was the most accessible.

The Amakusa members who had infiltrated Parallel Sweets Park were holding hands as they prepared for the Miniature Pilgrimage.

As conditions for its use, the Miniature Pilgrimage could only be used at midnight, and the ritual to prepare it had to be completed beforehand. As the timeframe in which the miniature portal could be used was only 5 minutes long, it would be too late if they waited until midnight to begin the ritual. The ritual had to be activated exactly at midnight, however, so if necessary, they could finish it first and then activate it at midnight.

None of the preparations for the ritual required any weird magic circles or spell chanting.

Aside from having infiltrated a theme park that was not open for service, these people were not really that strange. There were young people gathered in groups of 4 to 5, talking together; some occasionally took out French fries and hamburgers from paper wrappers to eat; some were holding discussions in front of the theme park’s introductory board; and others were standing and flipping through travel guidebooks. Their actions seemed quite normal.

Their attire was much more commonplace than those worn by Index or Stiyl: one girl wore a cutie top and a pair of short jeans, a boy had donned a mixed-colored shirt and baggy black pants, a lady wore an outfit with her overcoat slung over her shoulders, and so on. The only noticeable thing was that around 10 people were carrying sports bags, musical instrument cases, surfboards, and all other sorts of bulky luggage; these were the people responsible for

transporting weapons.

Only people of the same trade would be able to understand that every detail of their attire and actions was carefully planned.

There was a magical meaning behind everything.

The number of males and females, the age difference, the color combinations of the clothes, the act of having 4 to 5 people gathering together, the content of the discussion, the religious ritual that "eating" represents, the ingredients used for the hamburgers, what "eating meals" meant in magical terms, the page numbers where they stopped, the act of reading, adding up all the page numbers together…

All these were classified as "codes" or "logos". Every action by the organization created a spell and a magic circle. Like this, the spells of the Amakusa used things from everyday life that had originated from several abandoned religious rituals, choreographed over and over so people could not tell that they used magic. This trait originated from the Bakumou era, when they were forced to hide to avoid persecution.

It's about time…

Tatemiya Saiji stood alone, far away from everyone, and swung the sword in his hand horizontally.

The metal streetlights lost their light, breaking in half and leaving behind diagonal cuts.

Please observe carefully, for this is the Christian sect that is infused with many different religious values: the Amakusa Church.

He lifted his hands and muttered softly, looking at the night sky.

Part 5

It's like an abandoned ruin covered by the night sky.

That was what Kamijou thought when he looked at Parallel Sweets Park, 200 meters in front of him, where the special teleportation portal was. All the lights inside had been turned off, and what was originally a bright and vibrant theme park was now pitch-black. Although it had originally been designed to excite and delight people, right now, it was having the opposite effect. The warm, moist, and yet uncomfortable wind blew all of Kamijou's sweat away.

Kamijou turned his eyes away from Parallel Sweets Park and looked beside him. Several nuns dressed in black robes were gathered in the large parking lot of a department store. It was another strange scene.

Then, Kamijou turned to look at Index. Index continued to write on her palm using her thumb, likely simulating how everything would go in her mind. It seemed like she was unwilling to let Kamijou get involved in this battle between spellcasters. As there were fewer members of the Roman Catholics than available involved in this, the danger was much greater; Index was now a lot more anxious than she had been a few hours ago.

On the other hand, Stiyl stood behind Index, smoking a cigarette like usual. Of course, he was most likely thinking about ways to protect Index.

Agnese walked towards Kamijou and company, her thick-soled sandals continuing to make that tapping sound.

Right now, she seemed like a completely different person. The look that she had revealed when she had been bathing or when she had been sleepy inside Kamijou's futon, of her seemingly going to cry anytime, seemed to befit her age. But right now, when she was working, she was like a person who had forgotten all emotions. That sense of nervousness that had caused her legs to tremble so badly that she seemed about to fall was now all gone.

"We've found the Amakusa's main forces at Parallel Sweets Park, but there's no sign of The Book of the Law or Orsola. Although the probability is low, this may be a diversion by the enemy. So, I can't remove the perimeter or recall our patrol squads. Right now, we can only use the manpower we have with us."

Agnese said firmly, as if it was a foregone conclusion.

Kamijou repeated her words in his head, and said,

“Not knowing who has custody of The Book of the Law, or even where Orsola is in this area, is a huge bother to us. Is there any way we can save her? If we spend too much time looking for her, won’t the Amakusa escape with her in tow or even use her as a hostage?”

Once the enemy is really pressured, they’ll take a hostage to shield themselves. To Touma, this was almost like a golden rule.

Touma thought about Orsola. She was a girl who lacked common knowledge, ignored what other people said, and would get lost if no one kept an eye on her. No matter what, Kamijou did not want to see her being threatened by the enemy with sharp blades or guns.

Agnese said without hesitation, however,

“If they move out of Parallel Sweets Park, our perimeter will pick them up. As for the hostage...I'm guessing the Amakusa won’t use her as a hostage.”

“Why?”

Kamijou asked, puzzled.

“The Amakusa’s main objective is to find a way to read The Book of the Law with Orsola’s help. If they use her as a hostage and kill her in the process, all their plans will have gone to waste. Since they want to use the power of The Book of the Law, they’ll want to ensure Orsola's safety through any means.”

Stiyl shook the cigarette in his mouth, and said,

“My guess is that, because they lost Kanzaki, the Amakusa want to use The Book of the Law to replenish their fighting strength. And since they’re using such tough means, I'm guessing that they’re really hard-pressed. In other words, if they fail in their attempt to steal The Book of the Law, they won’t be able to make a comeback next time. So, they’ll pay extra attention to Orsola’s safety.”

“...in other words, this means that we have to save Orsola before the Amakusa destroy everything indiscriminately?”

Kamijou felt that this was truly a dilemma. If they pressured the Amakusa too much before they found Orsola, the Amakusa would probably kill her in the process; if they took it too easy, there would be less time to look for her. Also, the difference in battle strength between them meant that there was no room for mistakes.

Agnese seemed to understand the slight dilemma, and said,

“For now, I’d like to divide our numbers into two groups. 80% of our main force will act as bait, and attack the Amakusa head-on. During that time, please act as guerrillas and investigate the interior of Parallel Sweets Park. Once you find The Book of the Law and Orsola, take them back.”

Agnese tapped the soles of her sandals on the ground, and said,

“They can only use the special teleportation magic before 12:05 AM. If we can’t retrieve her by this time, we’ll treat the situation as if Orsola is not in this area; at that moment, please leave this place. Once we defeat the Amakusa, we’ll perform a thorough search in this area.”

In other words, if Orsola was not found before that time, but was actually still in the compound, she would be facing grave danger.

Looking at Parallel Sweets Park, it appeared that trying to find someone was not going to be easy. According to Agnese’s information, there were 75 stores inside the compound.

Kamijou nervously swallowed his saliva. At that moment, Index said,

“We also can’t just leave the portal of the special teleportation magic unattended. If we don’t destroy it, the Amakusa might take Orsola away and escape through the portal. Although Touma can easily destroy an already-opened portal, the portal only opens at midnight. If we are going to try to stop this magic, we have to destroy all the tools used for the ritual. The problem, however, is that the Amakusa are best at disguising things; trying to find those things won’t be easy.”

“Finding The Book of the Law and Orsola, destroying the portal...seems like our schedule is rather packed.”

Stiyl said as he spat the cigarette onto the ground and stepped on it to extinguish

it.

Agnese saw that everyone had finished their mental preparations and raised one hand. The nuns behind her, numbering more than 70, raised their weapons, and the ice-cold clang of metal echoed throughout the night sky.

These people carried all sorts of weapons: simple ones, like swords and spears; ones that could barely be called weapons, like silver rods and giant crosses; and even stranger ones for purposes unknown, like gears as tall as humans and torches. Agnese also received a silver rod from a nun beside her.

“..this is unforgivable.”

Agnese Sanctis placed the silver rod against her shoulder and said viciously, looking at the darkness in front of her,

“The promotion of Christianity was originally to save humanity, and yet these guys are using their power for such a meaningless purpose. Once they use violence for such a trivial matter, others will use even more meaningless violence to stop them. Why can’t they understand such a simple chain reaction?”

“…”

This was truly a simple truth. To outsiders, it was reasonable; to insiders, easy to understand. Of course, Kamijou himself agreed wholeheartedly with it.

“Maybe I’m a bit disrespectful...but I don’t have a good impression of any magicians--it's not just the Amakusa, but especially those modern Western magic societies that appeared at the beginning of the 20th century that twist Christianity or use backdoor tricks. The most notable examples are those who falsely use magic circles with archangels' names like ‘Michael’ and ‘Gabriel’. Even if we ignored the 20th century, the alchemists who signed agreements with royalty during the witch-hunting era used such high-sounding rhetoric like ‘These are teachings of Christianity and not witchcraft, so I’m a loyal servant of God.’”

Agnese tapped her sandals again and said,

“Those people love to memorize the Bible from beginning to end, sieve through every word of God, and find loopholes in it. That's what they call ‘**Anti-God Black-Arts**’.[14] They aren’t scary outside enemies, but rather despicable thieves

from within. Magicians are like the politicians who'll exploit any loophole within the law, and then cause the downfall of a country. While we're following orders and queuing up to buy bread, these magicians will blatantly cut in line and cause all sorts of ridiculous problems. What I mean isn't that the magicians shouldn't have their bread, but that their act of cutting queue has to be condemned."

Now that Agnese was talking about Christianity, Kamijou had nothing to say. What Agnese wanted to emphasize was that she could not forgive the Amakusa for destroying (at least, that was what Agnese felt) the order that everyone followed. Stiyl Magnus, who was a real magician and had stood nearby and listened to Agnese's emotional speech, only revealed a delirious smile and a nonchalant look. As for Index, she looked as if she did not know what to do.

Necessarius is composed entirely of magicians; these words must be rather harsh to them. Thinking about it, women really are creatures who'll change really fast. Agnese was shaking nervously a while ago, and now she's completely changed. This is unbelievable.

Kamijou looked around, trying to find something else to talk about, and ended up looking at the Roman Catholic nuns around him.

"To be honest, even though you humbly say that you can't gather all your people, it's remarkable that you can gather this amount with just one order."

Kamijou said in a surprised and admiring tone. Once Agnese heard that, she smiled and replied,

"Our specialty is our numbers; we have compatriots in 110 countries throughout the world, and even in Japan, there are many of our Church Ministries. Also, we're building a new house of God called the Church of Orsola. If I remember correctly, it's located near here. Once it's complete, it'll be the largest Church in Japan. It's about the size of a baseball stadium."

A soft sound came from the soles of Agnese's sandals.

"Church of Orsola?"

"Yes. Orsola once went to 3 pagan countries to preach Christianity to them, and her contributions were great, so the superiors specially allowed a Church to be

built in her name. Doesn’t she speak Japanese really well?”

Now that Agnese mentioned it, that seemed to be the case. But there were a large number of foreigners around Kamijou who spoke Japanese so fluently, so he had not paid it too much attention. Of course, to Kamijou, who could only speak Japanese, that was a good thing.

“After the Church is built, we’ll be sending invitations. Before that, however, let’s settle the problem in front of us.”

Agnese revealed a smile full of self-confidence. She carried the seemingly heavy silver rod over her shoulders, and stamped her heels on the ground, creating a dangling sound. The 30-cm-thick soles bounced off, leaving behind a pair of ordinary sandals; it seemed like the soles worked like the zippers on the nuns’ robes, and one could choose to remove them at any time.

"...since it's easier to walk like that, why don't you normally just take them off?"

“Shut up; it’s called a sense of beauty. Wearing thick-soled sandals is my own style.”

Part 6

11:27 PM.

Kamijou, Index, and Stiyl had arrived at the metal fence near the workers’ entrance to Parallel Sweets Park.

Although they were not on the battlefield yet, Kamijou felt jumpy, as if the air were filled with static electricity. The enemy could be monitoring their actions from within the darkness on the other side of the wired fence. Even though the enemy was only hiding in a corner of the compound, the entire area seemed to be one large stomach of theirs.

Such a scary place…

A girl left alone here must be really uncomfortable. She might be surrounded by several vicious sword- and spear-wielding criminals, too.

Deep inside, Kamijou cursed. If he had known that this would be the outcome, he would have brought Orsola to Academy City from the very start. Right now, Kamijou was really regretting it.

“Hey, Stiyl…”

“What?”

“Do you think that we can finish everything within the time limit? Destroying the portal, finding The Book of the Law, rescuing Orsola, everything?”

After hearing Kamijou’s question, Stiyl became silent. Index looked nervous as she turned back and forth, staring at these two.

“…to be honest, it’s gonna be difficult.”

After a while, Stiyl said again,

“We have no idea where the Book of the Law or Orsola are inside this area. Also, we know something that the Roman Catholics don’t.”

Kamijou looked suspicious and puzzled.

“After this incident happened, Kanzaki Kaori, who was originally supposed to be in England, went missing. I’m afraid that she’s going to help her former subordinates… by engaging in some drastic actions. So, if we want to utterly defeat the Amakusa, that Saint will probably attack us.”

Stunned and tense, Kamijou felt his throat go dry.

The magician Kanzaki Kaori had managed to contain a real angel during the Angel Fall incident. Although Kamijou had not witnessed her entire battle against the angel, it was not hard to imagine how scary she was as an opponent.

He also felt that all the predictions that Stiyl was making about Kanzaki were rather reasonable.

“So, I'll advise you not to think of executing this plan perfectly. There are too many flaws in this plan, and too many risks. Our last line of defence is to prevent the Book of the Law from being decoded successfully.”

“If that's the case…”

Kamijou looked at Stiyl’s and Index’s faces, and said,

“Should we put Orsola's safety as our top priority?”

“I’ve no disagreements with that. Without the decoder, the Book of the Law would be useless even if they did have it. Also, the contents of the Book of the Law is ingrained within Index's head; the original has no value to us. Since the Book of the Law belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, even if we lost it, it wouldn’t hurt the Anglican Church one bit.”

“I also feel that this is a good idea. In any case, even if we disagree, Touma will take action on his own, right? Our numbers are few, so we have to work together.”

The two magicians of the Anglican Church, Index and Stiyl, had no disagreements.

As experts, it was expected that they knew things that Kamijou did not, but right now, they were using an idea that he, a layman, came up with.

“Um, thanks, guys.”

The two heard that and were somewhat stunned. Index already had a lot of different expressions, so it was normal, but Stiyl looked somewhat embarrassed.

Stiyl covered his mouth and said,

“Please don’t say disgusting things that’ll lower our morale before we attack. The battle will begin at 11:30 PM, and we have to go in at the same time. Seems like it’s about time…”

“Touma, when we go in, please be careful, alright? Stay behind me and follow my instructions, and you won’t get hurt.”

“Hm, what are you saying? My right hand is an iron wall against magicians! You should be the one staying behind me, and give me advice when necessary.”

“…”

“…”

Having different opinions, Kamijou and Index were now silent.

“…we’re about to begin our invasion; can you guys please get serious?”

Stiyl, who was coldly staring at the two regarding their argument, said softly. At that moment…

BOOM! An explosion erupted at the visitors’ entrance, far away.

Looking at the flames that were rising into the sky, Kamijou was flabbergasted as he said,

“…oi, do we have to make such a ruckus when attacking?”

“If we don’t do that, we’ll lose to the enemy in terms of momentum. Touma, don’t get careless.”

“They haven’t created any unrest yet. Seems like someone used a spell that repels passersby and creates a fixed image. However, there’s no sign of any of the Roman Catholics’ characteristics or habits…it seems like the Amakusa's. Having such an ability…this is really bad news for us.”

No matter what they said, it was time for action.

Index stuck the tip of her nose onto the wire fence, silently observing the compound. After confirming that there were no magical traps set, the trio climbed over the fence and into the dark compound.

The lights in the compound were off, so this place formed a mass of darkness within the entire city. One might even have felt that the stars in the sky were especially bright. The trio entered the tour route from the outside; through the gap between the shaved ice store and the almond jelly store, both of which were as large as jeeps; and got onto the tour route.

The tour route was a large circular road. Right in the middle was a watercourse, and the surface of the water was about 3 meters below them, the pool so deep that they could not see the bottom. Several small stores, like roadside ones, were arranged around the watercourse, each with only a bar and no space for the customers to eat inside. On the inside of the watercourse was a square with many tables and chairs. It seemed like the management hoped to divert the customers there.

"…"

If it were during the day, one ought to have been able to create some wonderful memories here. But right now, this place was as if it had come from a world in another dimension. There was not even any light, and all the stores were now barred by ice-cold shutters; it was as if no one in the entire compound welcomed Kamijou and company. Like someone who holds a flashlight below his chin and casts shadows over his face, there was a sense of fear and suspense here that could not be described. Even Index, a gluttonous girl who would love coming to this kind of place to eat, was now extremely tense as she stared into the darkness.

"Touma, Touma, there isn't much time left; we have to find Orsola first, and fast."

"Ya, there's only 30 minutes left. If we can find the exact location of the portal, we could still stick around and wait, but we can't expect too much right now."

Stiyl said. Maybe it was because he was afraid of giving his location away that he was not smoking. There were sounds of growls, shrieks, screams, things being destroyed, and explosions; it seemed like the battle between the Roman Catholics and the Amakusa had already begun.

"Right, I got it."

After Kamijou had finished saying that, he heard metal clanking against metal.

The sound seemed to come from above him. Kamijou casually looked up, and…

Four youths came crashing in from the roof of the shaved ice store.

They were wielding weapons that resembled Western swords.

“!?”

Kamijou frantically pushed Index aside, and Stiyl grabbed Index’s collar, pulling her beside him.

The swords carried the moon's reflection as they swung downwards, quickly smashing the place where Index had just been.

A boy and three girls. The four of them were about as old as Kamijou. Their attires were not as eye-catching as a nun's habit; instead, they were ordinary clothes that one could find on the streets. That, however, made the Western swords they were wielding even more sinister-looking.

Stiyl said reluctantly,

“A Hand-and-a-half sword, a bastard sword, a boar spear sword, a dress sword… seems like the people of this country really like Western culture!”

Kamijou felt that he had seen those names before, in several fantasy RPGs. The lengths of the four swords ranged between 1 and 2 m, and their designs were rather unique; one of them even had a small, circular-shaped thing that was like a bulbous plant on the tip of its thin blade. Kamijou really had no idea what that would be for.

Damn it, hasn't the main diversionary force attracted all the enemies yet?

The four teenagers landed on the ground, separating Kamijou from Index and Stiyl. As the road was narrow, Kamijou could not get past the four easily and regroup with both Index and Stiyl. Stiyl placed a rune on the ground, summoning a flame sword, then pulled something out from his torso, saying,

“This is for you. Don’t lose it if you don’t want to die.”

Kamijou hurriedly caught it. It was actually a silver cross necklace.

“This is…”

Kamijou looked up. Before he could even ask, “What’s this for?”, an Amakusa girl wordlessly raised a pair of thin swords as long as brooms--probably the dress sword--as she charged towards Kamijou.

“Wa!?”

Kamijou frantically jumped back, dodging the blow. The girl again stepped forward, swinging her sword. Kamijou could not react in time, and for a moment, did not know what to do. Luckily, he tripped and fell backwards, managing to dodge the strike.

“Danger! Touma!!”

Kamijou heard Index scream as the girl’s dress sword swung downward like a guillotine. Using his falling momentum to roll backwards, he barely dodged the blow.

Up until now, the enemy had not used any magic.

In this situation, the Imagine Breaker was useless. If he were to use his right hand to block, it would be cut in half.

“Index!”

Kamijou frantically shouted, but the four enemies were standing in the middle of the road, and so Kamijou was unable to get to Index. Stiyl raised his flame sword, standing in front of Index. Two of the enemies, both of whom were wielding longswords, charged forward, as if they wanted to run Stiyl and Index through.

DONG! There was a heavy collision sound.

“——!?”

Hearing that, Kamijou was scared nearly to death. But once he looked at it calmly, he noticed that Stiyl was not even bleeding. What was more, the two enemies who had charged at him simply went through his body.

A mirage.

Stiyl’s afterimage left behind a mocking smile and faded into nothing. The smile did not seem to be directed at the Amakusa, their enemies, but rather at Kamijou.

The duo then disappeared into thin air.

Right now, the four Amakusa were staring at Kamijou, who was the only one left at the scene.

Oi…wait a minute…if you're going to escape, at least discuss a signal and a rendezvous point! Damn it, I'm the scapegoat again? This isn't the first time! I remember the same thing happening when we were fighting the alchemist!

Kamijou, who had been left behind, quickly turned around and scampered away. The enemy did not seem to know how to react upon seeing that.

Kamijou looked back as he ran and saw 3 of them running off in different directions. It seemed like they were chasing after the escaped Index.

There was only one enemy left.

Only the girl who had raised her sword and swung at Kamijou continued to pursue him. She was really fast. Even though she was wielding a large and heavy Western sword, she moved as fast as a bird.

Oh, no…! I'll be caught if I just run straight!

Kamijou quickly left the circular tour route and dove into a space between two stores that was not even 70 cm wide. The space could not be considered an "alley", but was rather a "gap".

While running through the tiny gap, Kamijou suddenly tumbled forward. The shop here seemed to be undergoing renovation, as a signboard had been placed next to the wall and toolboxes had been scattered on the ground. He had tripped on these.

Wa…! Why do they leave these things around and not pack them away nicely!?

If he were to continue running like this, his back would be hacked down by the girl sooner or later. Kamijou looked at the overturned toolboxes, hoping to find something that could be used as a weapon, but he immediately realized that it would not work. Even if he were to swing a hammer wildly, he could not possibly beat a real sword. Even if he were to randomly grab and throw some stuff, they would likely be cut in half by the enemy.

…they would be cut in half? If so…!

At that moment, the girl wielding the dress sword slid against the ground with her soles, arriving at the entrance of the shop like a drifting car.

Kamijou frantically grabbed something that was like a toothpaste tube and threw it behind him.

The girl did not even look at the tube-like thing as she raised her sword, slicing it in half. The girl then raised her sword again, rushing into the gap.

“!!”

Kamijou quickly stood up, crossing his hands over his head.

The girl’s blade did not pause as she cut the air, swinging down onto Kamijou’s head. In terms of power, it was definitely enough to cut Kamijou’s hands and body in half.

Thunk!

Unexpectedly, the sound created as the blade hit his wrists was dull. There was not even a scratch on Kamijou’s skin.

The toothpaste tube-like thing actually contained grease used for machinery.

Such a highly viscous substance would stick on the blade like blood or fat and greatly reduce its sharpness. If the girl were using a heavy sword like a Japanese one, even if it was not sharp enough, it would still have had enough weight to break Kamijou’s wrists. It was too bad, however, that the girl was using a ceremonial sword that had belonged to ancient royalty. Although it was decorated with gold, silver, and all sorts of gems, the blade was long and thin, so it lacked destructive power.

“!?”

The girl frantically raised her dress sword once more.

“Too late!!”

Kamijou had already swung his arms to the side, flinging the blade away, and slammed into the girl's waist viciously. With his entire weight pressing against

her, the blow bowled her over backwards. Kamijou was kind enough to protect the girl's head with his hand, however, so the back of her head did not hit the ground full-force.

The collision knocked out all the air within the girl's lungs, and she could not move. It was like someone who completely lost her body balance and got tossed by a judo throw; it was expected that she would faint.

"…ouch, it hurts."

After confirming that the girl was not hurt, Kamijou sat on the ground with one buttock, looking up. Above him was a night sky cut into a square by the four walls of the building. Such a scene was rather common in an alley.

In Academy City, street-fighting in the alleys was very different from what Japan normally saw or imagined. That was because many students, as long as they could manipulate their powers well enough, were far scarier than guns. Besides that, several delinquents wielded special weapons that were not inferior to esper powers. Maybe it was because Kamijou was used to those things that he was able to react accordingly when facing off against a sword user.

Kamijou sat down and adjusted his breathing, studying the dress sword that the girl had held originally. Although the blade was thin, it was heavier than expected, maybe because of its center of gravity. After thinking about it, Kamijou felt that he could not use the sword, since he did not know any sword techniques, and therefore could not possibly beat an enemy with it. Also, if he were to hit an enemy with it, the enemy would definitely bleed; just thinking about it made him shiver. Although its sharpness had decreased by a lot, Kamijou was not willing to take this thing and recklessly swing it around.

Thinking about it, though, if he were to leave the sword here, then when the Amakusa girl woke up, it was likely that she would come chasing after him again. So, Kamijou could only drag that heavy sword away from her position.

Damn it, what happened to Index and Stiyl? And where's Orsola? Should I meet up with them? Or should I find Orsola on my own?

This was the consequence of not setting up a rendezvous point. Now that he thought about it, Kamijou had not expected to be working separately from them from the very beginning. After thinking about his next strategy, he dragged the

heavy sword back to the circular road.

Suddenly, a figure came crashing into his side.

!?

When that figure rushed out of the shadows, Kamijou had not sensed it at all. Crashed into like that, he lost his balance and quickly threw his longsword away, trying to prevent himself from being stabbed accidentally as he fell.

Right now, the situation could be said to have been completely reversed. Kamijou was the one who had been knocked onto the ground, but he had braced himself, so the damage he had received was not as bad as what the girl had suffered. To prevent the enemy from jumping him, he raised his fist, preparing to fight back.

“…eh?”

Kamijou relaxed his fist immediately, however, because there was something strange about the enemy in front of him. The enemy wore a black nun’s cap and robes. It was already very hot, and yet this nun's clothes covered her entirely from head to toe. Not only that, but her hand had also been tied to her back with white duct tape, each of her hands holding onto the opposite elbow. Even her mouth had been gagged with duct tape. Looking closer, he noticed that the duct tape seemed similar to fabric, and that distorted kanji-like text were inked on top.

Anyone could tell that this was Orsola Aquinas.

At that moment, Kamijou heaved a sigh of relief, and his entire body crashed onto the ground.

“Mmmm! Mmmmmmmm! Mmmmmmmmmmmmmm!”

The moment Orsola, who was gagged up by that weird talisman, saw Kamijou, she tried to talk.

“What? Since you specially came all the way to Japan, you want to meet a real sumo wrestler? You’re really like an old granny! Not all Japanese are sumo wrestlers!”

“Mmm—!”

“Ah? Wait…I’m only jok—!”

Before Kamijou could finish speaking, an angry headbutt met his chest. Both he and Orsola went crashing onto the ground. At first, Kamijou could only cough and gasp for breath, but after a while, he realized that his hands were touching something soft. Actually, his hand was placed on Orsola’s voluptuous and ample breast, the heartbeat and warmth traveling through his hands, but Orsola did not seem to realize it.

Eh? WAAA!

Kamijou immediately went red. Quickly climbing up from under Orsola’s body, he used his right thumb to gently remove the talisman taped onto Orsola’s mouth. Now that she felt someone touch her lips indirectly through the talisman, Orsola revealed a stunned expression, but upon feeling the talisman fall on its own naturally, she was even more shocked.

“May…may I ask…are you the mister who I met at the bus stop? Why…”

“Of course I’m here to save you! Ahhh, save the details for later; anyway, we have to get out of here!”

Kamijou looked around him, and after confirming that no one was around, retrieved the sword he had just thrown aside.

Orsola did not seem to be aware of what was going on, as she muttered seemingly to herself, and not to Kamijou,

“Eh? Eh? May I ask…you’re really…trying to save me? It does not concern… The Book of the Law?”

“I’m too lazy to bother with that kind of thing. You think that I’ll run all the way here just for an ancient book? Do I look that carefree?”

Kamijou shook his head as he shouted. Orsola seemed scared and shocked as she jerked back.

“Ah…um…really…thank you for your grace and kindness.”

“…you don’t need to thank me. Oh, yeah, why are you here? Where are those Amakusa?”

“The…the Roman Catholics and the Amakusa seem to be having a big fight. I escaped during this mess…now that I think about it, the Amakusa don’t seem to be good at confinement and imprisonment.”

Kamijou picked up the dress sword and went behind Orsola, breaking the seal on her wrists.

Orsola massaged her hands that were just freed, and asked,

“Thank…thank you. However…may I ask…how did you do it…?”

“Hm…? This is my special ability…I’m not going to explain it to you; the development process of esper powers on the science side will probably confuse you badly. Come to think about it, why are you still here strolling around? Why didn’t you think of escaping right away?”

“It’s not that I didn’t wish to escape, but that I couldn't; the two sides were fighting really hard at the entrance. Also, my hands were tied, so I couldn't get over the fence. And just when I was looking for another entrance…!”

Before Orsola could finish speaking, Kamijou suddenly grabbed her arm and ran back to the gap between the shops. Orsola saw the Amakusa girl, who had fainted and was lying on the ground, and nearly screamed.

“…quiet!”

Kamijou whispered as he covered Orsola’s mouth with his right hand. He then ran to the end of the gap, and upon arriving there, pressed his body against the wall.

Several footsteps could be heard from the circular road outside, before becoming softer and softer.

These people did not seem to be looking for Index and Stiyl, but rather for the escaped Orsola. Each of them wielded either a sword or an axe, and were giving the others orders. They looked really scary.

After confirming the footsteps to be far away, Kamijou leaned his back onto the wall and slowly sat down. Orsola followed suit, gracefully sitting down beside him.

Part 7

It appeared that the place where Kamijou and Orsola were sitting was a blind spot to the Amakusa. They were at the back of a shop, and there were shrubs growing around them, so if they kept low, it would be impossible for them to be seen from afar.

Because the safety area was small, however, Kamijou and Orsola were unable to move. Those youths from the Amakusa were running around, as their footsteps continued to echo from the tour routes nearby. Anyone who heard those footsteps could understand that the duo would be found if they moved out.

Kamijou worried about Index and Stiyl's safety. As Orsola was beside him, for them to stay inside Parallel Sweets Park and not escape was dangerous and meaningless. Kamijou was unable to contact them, however, and he could not take the risk of leaving his hiding place to go look for them.

"I heard that the special magical teleportation portal can only be activated from midnight to 12:05 AM; in other words, as long as I hide here, the Amakusa's plan won't work either way. But is that a good idea…?"

Kamijou took out his phone, wanting to check the time on the display, but he was afraid of the screen's light giving away his location in the darkness, so he stopped halfway through. He thought, *it would be great if I could contact them by phone*. It was too bad Index's phone had been taken by that Calico cat, and he did not know Stiyl's number.

Kamijou sat down, stretching his legs forward, and accidentally touched the blade of the dress sword. The sound and touch relieved Kamijou of his thoughts and awareness, and he realized at that moment that he was breathing heavily. He wiped his forehead with his hand, and found that he was sweating abnormally

heavily. Maybe it was because he was overly nervous that even a short amount of exercise made him sweat like he had just ran a marathon.

“Eh?” Orsola seemed to realize that, as she grabbed a laced handkerchief from her sleeves. Kamijou had a bad premonition about it and shifted his butt backwards.

“No…there’s no need for that, no need! A little sweat is nothing; don’t dirty your handkerchief! Come to think of it, something similar happened at the station… GwuaaaaHHHH!”

Before Kamijou could finish speaking, Orsola mercilessly pressed the handkerchief, filled with a flowery aroma, onto his face.

“If you don’t wipe the sweat off, you may catch a summer cold! Ah, yes, didn't something similar happen near the bus stop?”

“Didn’t I tell you the same thing a while back? Just eight seconds ago! You really are an old granny that doesn’t listen to other people’s words! This is unbearable…really unbearable! Stop pressing against my mouth and nose!”

Kamijou, in a slight state of asphyxia, tried to gather enough strength to escape from Orsola’s handkerchief attack, but it was useless. While Orsola continued to wipe Kamijou’s face to her heart’s content, she revealed a dazzling smile, and asked,

“May I ask, are you from Academy City?”

“Cough cough…ugh…hm? Yeah, that’s right.”

“Since you’re from Academy City, why did you appear here of all places? Your actions should be somewhat related to the Roman Catholic Church, right? But from what I know, there’s no Church in Academy City, right?”

Orsola’s tone was somewhat skeptical.

But Kamijou's attitude was rather melancholic.

“Oh, I’m special. There’s a friend of mine among the Anglicans. I was roped into helping in this case for some reason, and I'm not even clear about what’s

going on.”

When Orsola heard that, her shoulders jerked.

It was like she was reacting to some major report.

“Hm? Are you worried? If I’m not wrong, you’re from the Roman Catholic Church, right? Is the relationship between the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans that bad?”

“No, it’s not that.”

Orsola silently thought for a while, and then continued,

“May I confirm it again? You’re here to help on request from the Anglican Church, right?”

“Yeah.”

Kamijou casually nodded his head.

Orsola muttered a “Mmmmm…” sound, and did not respond for a while.

After a few minutes, Orsola suddenly opened her mouth and said,

“Ah, you’re sweating quite a bit.”

“Enough, I beg you! Stop wiping my sweat away!”

“In other words, you’re here on the Anglican Church's instructions and not the Roman Catholics Church's, right?”

“Ugh…our conversation jumps from one topic to another? Eh…it’s not really that formal. Ah, let me clarify first, I can’t help you do anything for the Anglican Church, since I’m a resident of Academy City.”

“I…see.”

For some unknown reason, Orsola let out a laugh, as if she had been relieved of a burden.

“That's the case, alright. Someone like you shouldn’t get involved with our side.”

“…you think so? Hm…so, carrying this thing around is useless.”

Kamijou said as he looked at the cross that Stiyl had thrown to him before he had left. Although he had no idea what effect this thing had, the moment he had caught it with his right hand, that effect would have been nullified.

“Ah, is that the cross that Anglican friend of yours gave you?”

“How do you know?”

“There are many different shapes and designs for a cross, such as a Latin Cross, a Celtic Cross, a Maltese Cross, a Saint Andrew’s Cross, a Patriarchal Cross, and a Papal Cross.”

“Oh, I see. However, this thing in my hand is useless to me. It feels weird for an atheist to be holding this. Why don’t I give it to you?”

Kamijou had said that casually, yet when Orsola heard it, she looked so happy that she was about to jump.

“Ah, is that true?”

“Yeah. Although I don’t know why Stiyl would give this thing to me, there’s probably not too much significance. Also, that guy knows that I can’t use magic…he really likes to tease people; maybe it’s a joke. Oh, yeah, this cross should be useless now, since, even though I’m clueless about magic, I've already touched it with my right hand.”

Kamijou handed the cross over to Orsola as he said this.

Orsola grabbed his hand in a handshake, however, and wrapped her other hand around his, saying,

“May I ask you something?”

“Eh? Wha…what?”

Orsola's hand was even softer than Kamijou had expected, making his voice tremble.

"I hope that you can help me put this necklace on."

"Ah? Oh…okay."

Kamijou replied. For his convenience, Orsola closed her eyes and raised her chin to allow Kamijou to put the Cross around her neck. It really looked like she wished for Kamijou to kiss her. Kamijou freaked out and frantically looked down, only to see Orsola's chest. Her already ample chest now looked much larger thanks to her posture.

"WAAAAAAA!" Kamijou was so scared that he did not know what to do.

"Hm? What?"

"Noth…nothing! Really nothing!"

"Oh?"

Orsola gave him a skeptical look with her eyes still shut. Kamijou hastily unfastened the necklace. Orsola's neck was covered entirely by white cloth, so Kamijou hung the necklace around her neck. It was not until that moment that he realized he should have hung it from behind her; trying to hang it from the front was like wrapping his hands around her and hugging her. That made him extremely nervous. Kamijou's fingertips touched the back of Orsola's neck, his hands trembling continuously and not following his commands. It took him quite a while to hang the necklace around her neck.

Orsola looked rather satisfied as she continued to touch the Cross on her chest. Kamijou casually looked where her hand was pointing, but his eyes were attracted by her huge breasts, so he quickly looked away. Once there was an embarrassing thought within his head, it lingered on for quite some time. Kamijou could not stand the silence any longer, and so decided to come up with something to talk about.

"Oh, yeah, I heard that you know how to read The Book of the Law."

"It's not exactly reading. I would call it deciphering…"

Orsola said this slowly, but halfway through, she thought of something, and immediately turned around rigidly.

“Ah, please don’t misunderstand. I’m not asking you how to decipher it. I’m just curious: why do you want to analyze The Book of the Law? Isn’t the book supposed to be dangerous?”

Orsola stared at Kamijou for quite some time, then finally relaxed. She said,

“On a certain level of significance, it’s to gain power.”

She shook her head slightly, and continued,

“Do you know what kind of thing an Original grimoire is? That one can’t destroy an Original through any means?”

“Um. I've heard of this before. The reason seems to be because the letters, words, and sentences will form some sort of magic circle, right?”

“Yes. A grimoire is actually a blueprint. A grimoire that records lightning magic is also a mechanism that creates lightning. Even if an Original-class grimoire doesn’t rely on magic power, as long as it can amplify any energy hanging aroud from Ley Lines and the like, it will form a self-defensive magic circle that will continue to be active semi-permanently."

Orsola thought for a while, and said,

“With our spells now, we can’t destroy any grimoires. The most we can do is seal them and not allow others to read them.”

She then continued,

“Being unable to do so now, however, doesn’t mean that it can’t be done in the future. Since the original is also a grimoire, if someone added in a few specific letters or words, they’d be able to make it ineffective. It’s like operating switches to change a train's path; we can use it on the grimoire itself in order to destroy its magic circle. In other words, it’s to allow the original to self-destruct.”

Finally, she said firmly,

“The power of a grimoire isn’t going to give anyone happiness, and it’ll only bring about war. So, I’ve been analyzing this book, hoping to destroy the original.”

Stunned, Kamijou stared at Orsola.

He had originally thought that the reason why Orsola was trying to decipher The Book of the Law was to gain power, but it was actually the opposite. The reason why Orsola was analyzing The Book of the Law was to make its tremendous power disappear. Now that he understood that, Kamijou heaved a sigh of relief deep inside.

Dong! There was a heavy sound from outside.

The sound came from the other side of the shop, in the direction of the circular tour road; at that moment, something came flying in from above and into Kamijou’s sight.

It seemed like a person.

A priest that had red hair and was wearing a black coat.

“Sti… yl…?”

Before Kamijou could finish speaking, Stiyl had already landed heavily onto the ground as his back crashed into the shrub that was originally covering Kamijou and Orsola. His clothes were torn badly by a sharp sword, blood flowing out profusely from his wounds.

That sound just now came out from the other side of the shop, but he fell here? Don’t tell me he actually flew over from there!

Kamijou conjured a horrific image in his head.

Stiyl, who was on the ground, shouted,

“Damn it! Kamijou… Touma… what are you doing? Hurry up and run!”

“Eh?”

Kamijou was stunned. At that moment, something that looked alive pierced through a wall two stores away from him.

“!?”

Before he could understand what was going on, the wall of the store completely collapsed. A silhouette appeared from behind the wall like a killer whale emerging from water. The construct which had lost its support quickly collapsed behind him as the shoulder-wide planks fell beside this silhouette. But this guy was unfazed by it, even revealing a slight smile.

He was a male around 25 years old, with a tall and skinny figure, but he was wearing a large T-shirt and jeans that even a sumo wrestler could wear. The T-shirt was white in color, with two red stripes forming a cross on the left side of his chest. His hair was waxed extremely messily, as if it was deliberate. The highlight however should be his hair. His hair was really so black that it was likely that he had used a black hair dye to dye it. It was not only black, it gave off a mysterious shine like a carapace. He was wearing basketball shoes with shoelaces so frightening long it measured about 1m. As it was so long, even if he were to accidentally step on it, it was unlikely that he’d trip. There was a rope made of either leather or another similar material hanging around his neck, with four to five mini fans about 10cm big hanging on the rope around his neck.

Nobody could guess the intentions behind his get-up.

Of course, the most unbelievable thing as what he was holding.

A Flamberge.

A 17th century dual-handed sword that originated from France and was about 180cm long. The unique characteristic about this blade was that the blade was as curvy as a flame. It was said that the current design was meant to increase its destructive power.

It would normally be made of steel and a ceremonial blade would have gold leaf over that, but this blade was pure white. It looked like a plastic model one step before completion. The material could have been a carved down dinosaur bone, a special mass of carbon, or a material used in aviation. A mere high school boy like Kamijou could not tell at a glance, but it certainly did not appear to be metal.

That man was casually holding that huge sword that had no place in modern society.

“Heh heh. What are you doing, Anglican priest? C'mon, what happened to your pride as an English gentleman? Show it to me. Show it to Tatemiya Saiji. You've gotta do better than that or you won't be able to protect even a single girl.”

Stiyl pulled out a rune card and clicked his tongue

He was not looking at the threat before him, that man wielding a large sword. He was looking past Tatemiya Saiji and at the white nun who was standing defensively on the spectator course beyond the destroyed shop.

“You’ve been fighting while protecting her…?” muttered the surprised Kamijou.

Stiyl’s magic emphasized numbers to gain strength. As long as the place was filled entirely with rune cards, he was able to use powerful magic. In other words, this battle was rather disadvantageous to him. He had no time to set the field up as he had to fight while moving. Also, he was protecting Index, and there was no other way out except to use his own body as a shield.

“Don’t bother about these unimportant things,” Stiyl said in a tone that felt like he was going to vomit blood anytime. “……Very good, looks like you found Orsola Aquinas. You’re the same as always, I don’t know whether to call it a blessing or a misfortune……anyway, hurry up and run away! Don’t think of beating him, it’s our victory as long as we escape!”

Stiyl attempted to support his body with his heavily trembling legs, and was unable to succeed.

Tatemiya Saiji happily looked at Stiyl, and then turned to look at Orsola, saying,

“Oh yeah, why am I meeting you here again? Didn’t I tell you so many times? Orsola Aquinas, we don’t intend to harm you any further.”

His tone sounded frivolous, as if he didn’t even want anyone to agree with him.

Orsola looked at the collapsed store, and the injured Stiyl, and the Flamberge in Tatemiya’s hand.

“The first time you said that to me, it was really full of hope. But now, I can’t trust the peace that you bring through violence.”

“Too bad. Even if you return to the Roman Catholic Church, what’s the point?”

Tatemiya gently waved his hand wielding the Flamberge, as if he was trying to

confirm that nothing strange was on his shoulder.

“……”

Kamijou silently stood in front of Orsola.

He did not have a weapon in his hand. Even if he was to swing an unfamiliar weapon around wildly, he couldn’t possibly beat the opponent in front of him. He might as well not use a weapon which was heavy and unfamiliar to him.

Tatemiya stared at Kamijou’s face, followed by the ceremonial sword that lay beside his feet.

“No combat stance, no artifacts, and no hidden magic code on your clothes. You’re really ‘unarmed’. Hm, although I don’t feel like fighting against an amateur……seems like I have no choice. That sword, did you get it from Uragami?”

Tatemiya scowled, his expression looked severely distorted, deliberately giving off a sense of invisible pressure.

Kamijou had never heard of the person called Uragami.

“If you’re referring to your subordinate, she’s lying down there. I protected the back of her head, so it shouldn’t be life-threatening.”

“...It’s not a matter of her being alive or not. Are you mocking us, you bastard!?”

There was now no sense of frivolity in Tatemiya’s tone now.

Seeing this reaction, Kamijou could already see Tatemiya’s character. He was not a monster, he was an ordinary man who would rage when his comrade was bullied.

“Since you’re someone who’ll fight for others, can you please put your blade away? I don’t really want to fight with someone like you.”

“I’m thinking the same thing, but the problem can’t be solved that easily. Although our main enemies are the Roman Catholics, since you Anglicans have joined in, I can’t just ignore this. Moresoever, I can’t let Orsola be taken away by

you guys.”

Tatemiya raised the sword that was almost 2 meter long above his head easily, swinging it wildly like a cheerleader captain waving her baton.

“Anyway, you have become an attack target of mine now. I’ll see less blood if you are willing to kneel down and surrender.”

Tatemiya laughed, though he looked regretful.

Although he said it like this, he had predicted how the enemy would respond.

Of course, Kamijou was rather scared. He was aware of what kind of person a ‘Real Magician’ was. And among them, those ‘magicians that don’t over rely on magic’ were the hardest to take on. For someone like the alchemist, Aureolus Izzard, as he already had a powerful magic move, he wouldn’t prepare for a second move. But for someone like Tsuchimikado Motoharu, he wouldn’t rely on his spells too much, so he would always use different techniques.

Tatemiya Saiji was obviously the latter. Even if he didn’t use magic, he could use the Flamberge in his hand to hack Kamijou’s head in an instant. Just seeing that he had been able to beat Stiyl without a single scratch (Of course, another reason is that Stiyl is distracted, having to protect Index) showed that he was really good.

Fighting with him was almost futile.

Kamijou’s entire body started to tremble.

It was like a rather fast child racing with an Olympic sprinter.

Should he surrender?

Since the enemy in front of him couldn’t be beaten with abilities, Kamijou was unable to think of anything that could reverse the situation.

The problem was……

(If I surrender, what’ll happen to Stiyl?)

Stiyl bent his body, gasping heavily for breath, and glared at Tatemiya.

The reason why he had decided to take part in this was because he thought that it would be beneficial to Index. So, he would never give up. The reality of despair and Kamijou's advice were not going to stop this man, Stiyl Magnus.

But if he didn't give up, the outcome could be easily seen.

(If I surrender, what'll happen to Index?)

Index looked like she was going to rush in anytime and get between Kamijou and Tatemiya.

Once Kamijou started fighting with Tatemiya, the option of 'surrender' would disappear. If so, she would try her best to create a chance for the outsider to the magical world, Kamijou to escape. Even if she was unable to fight, even if both sides had their special abilities, even if Kamijou didn't wish for her to do that.

Finally……

(If I surrender, what'll happen to Orsola?)

The Roman Catholic nun looked worriedly at Kamijou's face, and turned to Tatemiya's face.

Since Tatemiya wanted the knowledge, spells and power of the 'Book of the Law,' he would probably not kill Orsola straight away. On the contrary, he would protect her so that she wouldn't get caught in the crossfire.

But, once Tatemiya Saiji got Orsola, he would bring her back to the Amakusa's main base. Over there, if Orsola refused to co-operate and tell them how to read the 'Book of the Law,' one could guess what the outcome would be. And what Tatemiya Saiji and the Amakusa wanted was only how to read the 'Book of the Law,' and not Orsola Aquinas herself. Once they achieved their objective, it was unthinkable what they would do to Orsola.

("It's not exactly reading it. I would call it deciphering it……")

-What she wanted hadn't ever been the power of The Book of the Law.

(“On a certain level of significance, it’s to gain some power.”)

-To prevent something like this from happening, she was trying her very best.

(“We can use it on the grimoire itself to destroy the magic circle. In other words, it’s to allow the Original to self-destruct.”)

-But there were people who would mock and trample on her hard work, or even use her accomplishments for their own gain. This man was smiling as he stood in front of Kamijou.

(“The power of a grimoire isn’t going to give anyone happiness, and it’ll only bring about war. So I’ve been analyzing this book, hoping to destroy the Original.”)

Kamijou stretched his leg, kicked the ceremonial sword aside, and stepped forward.

No matter how sad or how awkward, the only one who could stop Tatemiya now was Kamijou.

Even so, was there any reason for Kamijou to release his fist?

“……Don’t look down on me.”

Kamijou murmured. The fist which was already as hard as rock was now even tighter.

When Tatemiya Saiji saw this, he sighed, as if he was trying to find regret from deep within the bottom of his heart.

“Seeing your eyes, that glare makes me feel so sad, really sad. Although the result has been settled, your outspoken personality makes me not want to kill you.”

Tatemiya gently waved the wavy longsword, the Flamberge.

“However, since it’s already settled, this day next year will be your death anniversary!”

Just as Tatemiya said that,

Kamijou heard a loud explosion. Tatemiya stamped onto the ground with his sole, filled with energy like that of an explosion. Kamijou was so nervous that his entire body froze, and his opponent had already taken the first step. Just one step and the tip of Tatemiya's sword would touch Kamijou.

Tatemiya raised the long sword high, and the light that was reflected from his blade made Kamijou unable to move, as he felt like a frog paralyzed upon seeing a snake staring at him.

He thought of raising his hands to protect himself. But that wouldn't be able to block the longsword.

(Wu……ugh……! Don't……don't be afraid! Hurry up and move!)

Kamijou continued to give orders to his stiff body, and finally managed to take the first step. It was not backwards, or sideways, but forward. Seeing Kamijou coming forward from slightly to the right, Tatemiya was somewhat intrigued, not understanding why an amateur would run into his attack range.

"Ho!"

Saiji breathed out some air and swung the sword down like a lightning strike.

This critical blow could cut Kamijou in half, who was rushing in like a cannonball.

"……!"

Next, Kamijou used his entire body strength and jumped, not 'slightly to the right,' but straight on towards Tatemiya's right arm. Sweat shed off into the air and was cut in half by the longsword. As this jump was completely different from what Kamijou would normally do, the impact to his ankle was rather great. Kamijou did not land successfully and lost his balance, slamming into the wall of the store beside him.

"Ha!"

Tatemiya turned his body around, swinging the sword that had landed onto the

ground. But upon seeing Kamijou leaning against the wall, he revealed a smile full of self-confidence.

(Here's a chance!)

Kamijou lowered his body as much as he could.

When the enemy lowered his sword, if he were to dodge sideways, the enemy would normally cut laterally as a follow up. Because if he raised his sword and attacked again, his movements would be slower.

Kamijou got as low to the ground as possible and rushed in front of Tatemiya Saiji.

There was no need to think of attacks other than a 'horizontal cut'. If Tatemiya insisted on doing a 'vertical cut,' he wouldn't be able to react to Kamijou's movements, who would land a punch on him before the sword landed.

Of course, as Kamijou expected, Tatemiya Saiji raised his sword and cut horizontally.

It grazed the top of Kamijou's head, entangling his heart in fear.

"WOO…OOOOOOOOOOO!!!!"

Kamijou shouted loudly, clenched his fist, and dashed in front of Tatemiya.

Even Orsola, who was on the same side as him, was scared and stunned by his momentum.

Even Tatemiya, who used his entire strength to swing this two-handed sword, couldn't dodge Kamijou's punch.

At that moment, Tatemiya Saiji disappeared.

Tatemiya, who was supposed to be in front of Kamijou, instantly backed away about 1m; and the sword, which had been swung horizontally, was now raised above his head for some reason.

It was like time was reversed and everything had restarted.

It was like an illusion that deliberately lured Kamijou in.

“Ah……?”

Kamijou felt a chill all over his body, and quickly rolled to the side.

DONG! The vertical strike split the ground like paper. Maybe it was because of too much friction, the dirt that flew looked orange, like magma.

That seriously didn’t look like something that could occur according to the laws of physics.

(Magic……? If so……!)

Kamijou clenched his fist tightly. If that blade was made of magic, he could destroy it with his right hand. He made up his mind and swung his right fist towards the blade that was flying over.

“No……Don’t! Touma!”

Hearing Index’s voice, Kamijou quickly retracted his fist. In order to protect Kamijou, who was now wide open, the young girl rushed forward without hesitation into Kamijou’s vision.

(No way……that isn’t magic?)

Those actions that Tatemiya had just used……

Moving backwards in a way that eyes couldn’t see, splitting the ground with a single strike.

Don’t tell me those were just simple sword techniques? Kamijou felt a chill inside him.

“No! Don’t come over! Index!”

Kamijou’s shout was unable to extinguish the girl’s determination. Tatemiya’s sword came swinging down again, and it was almost like sound could be cut. Kamijou, who originally believed that his right fist could neutralize the attack, didn’t come up with a plan B. Thinking about it now would be too late. Kamijou

could only stare widely and watch the blade come flying towards him.

“TOFF (O original flame), TMIL (turn thy into light), PDAGGWATSTDASJTM (blade of gentle protection and divine judgment)!”

Stiyl suddenly shouted, creating a huge explosion. It was an explosion caused by a fire absorbing too much oxygen. The flame sword in Stiyl's hands pierced through the night and successfully attracted Tatemiya’s attention.

“Damn it!”

Taking advantage when Tatemiya turned to look right, Kamijou jumped away in the opposite direction, trying to pull away from Tatemiya.

But, he failed.

When Kamijou made the first move, Tatemiya, who was looking in the opposite direction, was somehow able to catch up like a shadow. Tatemiya’s feet weren’t moving at all, and it was like he was skating on ice, his movements weren’t natural at all.

(Ma……gic……?)

Kamijou felt his back go numb.

When Tatemiya turned around, the large sword came swinging around like a tornado sweeping across. He frantically bent down to avoid this strike.

DONG! A heavy impact hit Kamijou’s waist, who should have avoided successfully.

Looking closer, a transparent snowball as big as a soccer ball was buried into Kamijou’s body. When he looked at it, the snowball vanished, as if someone colored it with watercolor. Because of the blow from the snowball, Kamijou was knocked to the ground, and continued to roll.

-Let's go back in time for a moment, to when Kamijou and Tatemiya just met each other.

When the boy was about to be sliced by that sword, Index rushed forward

without hesitation.

(That is……Amakusa……)

Index trembled as she ran.

Besides being fearful, she was impressed.

The magic that the Amakusa used wasn’t really special on its own. At least not as grand, unique and powerful as Stiyl’s Innocentius or Aureolus' ‘Alchemy’.

However, the Amakusa in turn used this point against them.

Kanzaki’s ‘Nanasen’ was probably the best example. If there was one word that could describe the Amakusa’s basic fighting style, it was ‘disguise’. Most of the attacks that looked like magic were just simple illusions, but among these illusions, there was a real magical fatal blow.

Index continued to run.

Kamijou and Tatemiya seemed to be standing abnormally far away from her.

Defending against magical attacks was a lot different from defending against non-magical attacks. Once you messed up, you would be in for some suffering.

Index’s Spell Intercept could seal off an enemy’s magic. As a magicians needed to think to create magic, by using words or action that would disrupt the magician who was chanting the spell, the magic would go out of control. It was like challenging someone to a tongue twister; saying something different in his ear would make a person mess it up.

But, the Spell Intercept wouldn’t work on the Amakusa.

The spells, talismans and magic circles that they used were too special. Their spells were made up of several religious significances in everyday business and interactions. Especially for an enemy like Tatemiya, whose magic was composed of 10 or 20 ‘Actions that had some magical meaning behind it’. The time taken for every single ‘action’ didn’t last for a single second.

With Index’s voice and technique, it was impossible to use Spell Intercept to

prevent the ‘actions’ in one second. Just after opening his mouth, Tatemiya’s ‘actions’ had stopped. As the conditions for activating his magic were all within his sword techniques, if one wanted to prevent his magic, they had to be able to match his sword movements. Of course, Index was unable to imitate those highly-difficult sword techniques.

In conclusion, even if Index were to rush in, she was unable to beat back Tatemiya Saiji. Besides the gulf in abilities between these two, Tatemiya’s specialties were the kind that Index had the most trouble handling. As a magic specialist, Index was acutely aware of this.

Kamijou took a hit from the magical snowball and rolled on the floor.

Tatemiya Saiji raised his Flamberge high, like a worker raising a hammer to hammer a nail in.

Index had no way to prevent the attack.

The Spell Intercept would have no effect on the Amakusa.

“Touma!”

But, Index’s feet never stopped moving.

She was not thinking that much either.

Seeing Index rushing in without caring for her own safety, Stiyl Magnus was frightened to death. She did not have any combat capabilities, and if she stood in front of Tatemiya, she would be hacked into two within a second.

“Ugh……!”

Stiyl only had a flame sword in his hands. If he wanted to activate ‘Innocentius,’ he had to quickly place rune cards, and there was no time.

If he were to rush in wildly now, he might be able to get in front of Tatemiya before Index did. He would then attack Tatemiya next, and explode the flame sword when Tatemiya blocked it with the Flamberge. This would likely cause a little interference.

The problem, however, was that Kamijou was now standing between Stiyl and Tatemiya.

If he were to charge towards Tatemiya, he would have to pierce through Kamijou first.

In an instant, the flame priest's face became distorted due to frustration.

The inner conflict inside him only lasted a while. Then, a glimmer of determination appeared in the priest's eyes.

(A long time ago, I swore—)

Stiyl Magnus tried to adjust his breathing with his dry mouth.

("—Sleep well, even if you forget everything, I'll remember it forever. I'll live for you, and die for you.")

In order to protect the most important thing, Stiyl aimed the flame sword at the teenager's back.

Exhaling all the oxygen inside his body and losing consciousness at the same time, Kamijou saw Tatemiya raise the longsword in front of him. He desperately recollected the thoughts that he had lost and tried to grasp the situation.

With his two legs shaking, there was no way Kamijou could dodge Tatemiya's next attack.

Index was rushing there, and in several seconds, she would be beside Tatemiya, and be killed.

Glancing behind, Stiyl raised his flame sword, but his own body seemed to be blocking the flame sword's path.

Within one second, Kamijou's thoughts were very clear.

If he didn't want to lose anyone, or anything, and allow everything to end with everyone smiling……

There was only one way.

“……Come on.”

Kamijou clenched his fist.

“Pierce me through as well, Stiyl!”

Kamijou squeezed out his last ounce of strength and dashed towards Tatemiya Saiji without hesitation.

Upon hearing this, Tatemiya Saiji was somewhat messed up.

There was an Anglican nun rushing in from behind him, but killing her will be easy. In order to protect the nun, the boy in front of him also clenched his fist, but he would be alright even after killing the boy in front of him, then the nun behind him.

The problem was the priest behind the boy.

That Anglican lowered the flame sword to his waist, and charged toward him.

“!?”

If the priest decided to stab him with the flame sword, it would pierce through the boy’s body without question. But, there was no sign of hesitation in the priest’s eyes. His eyes were as sharp as the blade of a knife, his mouth smiling like a beast, and his mind seemed to only think about taking down the enemy.

In order to block the flame sword’s strike, Tatemiya raised the Flamberge.

But at that moment, the boy placed his right fist backwards, preparing to strike like a hammer.

“Peh……!”

If he blocked this strike, he wouldn’t be able to defend against the flame sword. Also, the main objective of the flame sword wasn’t to hack, but to explode. He would probably die at once if he was not careful in handling this. If he did not quickly activate a spell that defended against flames to defend against the flame sword first, he would be swallowed in the flames caused by the explosion together with the boy, who was sacrificing himself.

(I’ve already cast a basic spell that defends against impacts earlier during our battle, a mere amateur’s punch shouldn’t be able to hurt me. What’s scary is that flame sword — got to set up an anti-flame spell first!)

Tatemiya swayed the sword that was raised like a river. By removing the flame attribute from the ‘Flamberge,’ and by swaying the sword around like a river to ‘suppress,’ he managed to create a spell called ‘Suppress fire’.

(Good! The spell is complete! Once the sword stabs through, be prepared to taste my counter……!)

Tatemiya Saiji stuck his large tongue out, licking his lips greedily.

The priest charged on and slams into the boy’s back. The flame sword in his hand would pierce through the boy’s body and towards Tatemiya’s abdomen.

(I win!)

—But, things didn’t turn out as expected.

Tatemiya had already prepared an anti-flame spell, intending to send the heat and flames caused by the explosion of the flame sword back. But nothing like this happened.

The boy forcefully pulled his right fist back, ready to slam him like a hammer, and the priest’s flame sword just happened to land on his fist.

Bam! A sound similar to that of a balloon bursting was heard. The priest’s flame sword exploded into fireworks, and vanished.

“Ah……? This is…… Wha—!?”

Tatemiya, who had already set up the anti-flame spell and thinking about a counter, did not understand a single thing that was going on.

BAM! A terrifying sound was heard as the boy’s fist landed brutally on Tatemiya’s face.

(Ka……aaaa……! The anti-impact spell……was broken through……?)

Tatemiya’s body flew backwards. Just when he was about to stand upright, the boy and the priest slammed into him. Being hit by the weight of two people, Tatemiya’s body rolled on the ground at an astonishing speed like he was being hit by a large hammer.

Just like this, Tatemiya lost consciousness.

Twang! The Flamberge left his hand and rolled on the floor.

Chapter 3: British Puritan Church. *Anglican_Church.*

Part 1

The battle was over.

Kamijou thought that maybe it was because the Amakusa were in a mess over losing Tatemiya, their leader. No fighting could be heard from afar, and the tension in the air was gone; these signs told Kamijou that the battle was over. As they hadn't met up with Agnese, they didn't know the situation, but it seemed like the Roman Catholics had won; otherwise, during that intense battle, more Amakusa members would have arrived as reinforcements.

He was worried about both the Roman Catholics and the Amakusa, concerned about the number of casualties suffered. Regarding this, Stiyl's reply was, "There's no deaths on both sides. Right now, the Roman Catholics are tying up the Amakusa members." Actually, he was able to transmit messages through cigarette smoke, so that was why he could be so confident about it. There seemed to be some meaning in the smoke patterns, but of course Kamijou was unable to understand it completely.

Slightly farther away, Tatemiya Saiji was sitting on the floor. There were rune cards on his hands, legs, chest, back, and forehead. These represented some really terrifying magic, and once he moved, his entire body would be set ablaze.

Right now, Stiyl was bringing Orsola to meet Agnese, so there was only Kamijou, Index, and Tatemiya.

"Touma, Touma! Are you alright? Are you hurt? Are you in pain?"

Index looked pale as she frantically took off Kamijou's clothes.

“Sto… stop it! Index! I’m not hurt anywhere… wah! Idi… idiot! Don’t touch that!”

“Then you better check yourself well! Is there anywhere where you’re hurt or feverish?”

Index cried out with tears in her eyes. Kamijou finally realized how worried she was, but he didn’t know what to say in response, so he could only follow Index’s orders and check his body.

“Um, there’s some pain on my waist, but it’s not so bad that I can’t walk.”

“Really? Are you really alright?”

“Yeah. To be honest, I’m already used to these sort of things. Fighting against espers in the alleys is rather dangerous. Also, during this summer, I’ve fought against a few magicians.”

“Um… that’s good…”

Index looks liked she was going to either smile or cry. Kamijou felt awkward and couldn't resist looking away.

“…So, now I can bite on Touma’s head to my heart’s content.”

“WHAT!?”

When those terrifying words were heard, the beast-like girl leapt towards Kamijou’s head.

“Wo— Ahhhhhhhhh! Wait a minute! Index! Is this what a girl will do when she’s worried about whether another person is injured? You’re creating a new wound in the process— KYAAAAAAAAA!!!”

“Of course I must bite! You made me so worried! Who do you think you are!? Touma! Don’t tell me you intended to beat a magician holding a large sword with a single fist? Are you crazy? Why didn't you use that weapon at your feet? And why did you still charge on when the enemy was saying that he would spare the amateur when he surrenders! What is our Touma doing?”

“Wait, wait! Wait a sec! Index-san! You’re going to kill me if you continue biting me like this! It hurts! I understand! Everything is Kamijou Touma’s fault, please don’t bite with such force…!”

“Anyway… anyway… Touma, did you really think of all the possibilities? Do you really know how long it takes for the Amakusa to set up an anti-flame spell? Wouldn’t you be cut in half if it completes before you can even imagine?”

“Why would I think that much? Actually, I thought that Stiyl would finish me off at the same time, it’s just that he never did! I’m not even aware of what an anti-flame defense spell— KYAAAA! It hurts! I’m sorry! I’m wrong! Index-sama!”

Kamijou continued to scream an awful cry that he had never made even on the brink of death. After a while, Index finally let go, feeling satisfied.

“…Humph, stupid Touma, always up to crazy business.”

Index gently said, letting her chin rest on Kamijou’s hair.

To Index, who was tired from biting on Kamijou’s head, this wasn’t any different from sprawling on the table. But Kamijou’s heart was now beating twice as fast. Besides being able to feel the girl’s chin on his head, Kamijou felt her long silver hair stroking his face, giving off a sweet aroma. And more importantly, Index was hugging Kamijou from the front, so her chest was only about 2 cm from his nose. Now that Index’s chest, which he hardly noticed, was right in front of him, Kamijou realized that there was a slight protrusion from it.

Wha… what’s with these different types of attacks? Ah, I understand! Next, she’ll realize that I’m looking at her chest, and continue to bite my head!

Kamijou became wary deep inside. However, Index unexpectedly let go of Kamijou without a single word.

She looked at the sky, as if she was opening her ears and listening to something.

“It’s so quiet. It’s hard to imagine that so many people were fighting just now.”

“Yeah.”

Kamijou casually agreed. Right now, silence would only give off a sense of

tranquility. There was nobody swinging weapons around, nobody shouting about, no breakage that could be heard.

“Oi.”

At that moment, Tatemiya Saiji, who was sitting far away from them, called out to Kamijou. He sounded anxious. Before Kamijou even started to turn around, Index had already raised her two hands and was standing in front of him, using herself as his shield.

Tatemiya stared at the duo,

“Bastard, can you help me remove these? I know you won’t, but I’m just asking. I can’t just leave her alone.”

“What?”

Kamijou frowned. After thinking about it for a while, he realized that the "her" Tatemiya was referring to was Orsola Aquinas.

“Are you an idiot? How can I just let the most dangerous person go…”

“You’re the idiot! Let me ask you something: do you really intend to hand her over to the Roman Catholic Church? You know what will happen if she goes back, don’t you?”

“What?”

Kamijou was speechless.

“No, Touma.”

Index was rather calm, and said,

“This person only uses words as a weapon; you must definitely not listen to him! Think: is there any benefit for the enemy to say the truth?”

“She’ll be killed.”

Tatemiya’s words drowned out Index’s.

“Listen well, I’ll tell you what’s going on. Don’t hand her over to the Roman Catholic Church; they’re intending to kill her.”

“You’re trying to tell me that you guys are Orsola’s friends, and are trying to help her escape? Don’t joke with me; there’s no such stupid thing! You’re the guys that snatched Orsola away! Not only that, you’re the ones who stole The Book of the Law! In order to get its contents, you guys launched an all-out attack, kidnapped her, and now you have the guts to say that you're the good guys? Do you think I’m an idiot?”

As he was overly angry, Kamijou shouted until his throat was hoarse, as if he was about to damage it.

But Tatemiya didn’t mind.

“We didn’t steal The Book of the Law.”

“Eh?”

“Think about it. Why would we steal The Book of the Law? The Roman Catholic Church is the largest Christian sect in the world with more than two billion believers. Would we fight against such a large group for merely The Book of the Law?”

“You can’t take him seriously, Touma!”

Being anxious, Index’s body went stiff, as she said with determination,

“We know that the Amakusa have become weak after losing their Priestess, so you’re trying to use the mystical and powerful magic recorded in The Book of the Law to make up for the loss in power, right?”

“But what reason do we have to add on to our power?”

Tatemiya smiled.

The sweat flowing down his face revealed his anxiety to settle this as soon as possible.

Kamijou suspiciously asked,

“If your power isn’t enough, wouldn’t you guys lose out to other factions?”

“That’ll be on the premise that others would attack us. The question is, how many times have the Amakusa been harmed in history? Don’t tell me that you didn’t think that we have countermeasures? Outsiders don’t even know where our main base is. Also, on the special teleportation magic ‘Miniature Pilgrimage’ that Ino Tadataka was most proud of, there’re still many ‘portals’ out there that nobody but us knows of.”

“Ah…”

Kamijou felt that Tatemiya’s words were starting to shake him up.

That was right. Among the many teleportation "portals", there were only twenty-three that they knew of.

“How is the enemy going to attack our main base when we’re the only ones who know where it is?”

That was true, Kamijou thought.

The objective of that battle had been to save Orsola before the special teleportation magic activated. And the reason why they had to do this was that nobody knew where their main base was. Once the Amakusa escaped, Orsola’s whereabouts would sink to the depths of the oceans.

In other words, nobody could attack their main base.

If so, was there any reason for them to defend themselves?

“So that means…”

The Amakusa were searching for The Book of the Law to defend themselves... by increasing their military strength?

Or…

"Hey, let me ask you something… What kind of grimoire is The Book of the Law?”

Since Tatemiya asked this, Kamijou, an outsider, could only look at Index. Index then proceeded to explain reluctantly.

“The Book of the Law is a grimoire written in a special code. The code itself is rather complicated... it can be said to be of a completely different language. In the past, the only one who everyone agreed could accurately decipher this book was the author, Edward Alexander, whose other name is Crowley. The author once said that the most important concept of The Book of the Law is ‘to desire, and it’ll be thy magic.’ As for the other details, no one knows.”

Index continued on,

“The Book of the Law records details that Aiwass elaborates on. It’s still a mystery as to what Aiwass is. Some say that it’s Crowley’s guardian angel; some say that it’s a criminal. As for the details, some believe that it teaches humans how to use angelic spells; and as the spells are too powerful, it’s said that once The Book of the Law is opened, the Christian age will end, and a new era will begin.”

“Here’s the problem.”

Tatemiya smiled as if there was some hidden meaning behind it.

“This is the crux. The power of The Book of the Law is really frightening. If humans can really use the angelic spells, I’m afraid that the Christian age will end within a day. When many people have power that far exceeds the Pope's, the power pyramid that the Church so carefully built will crumble.”

Tatemiya paused, and then continued,

“But not everyone wants this power.”

“Why? Although I’m not a magician, and it’s unrelated to me, to you magicians, wouldn’t getting stronger magic mean getting a higher standing?”

“What’s the point of having a higher standing? To be honest, we have no intention of getting that power. No, I’ll say that any normal Christian wouldn’t want that power.”

“But, didn’t the Roman Catholic Church protect The Book of the Law in order to

get its power?”

Kamijou was confused now. However, Index seemed to have understood what Tatemiya's trying to say, and couldn’t help but look down.

“The answer is simple.”

To the boy’s naïve question, Tatemiya silently laughed, and answered,

“The Roman Catholic Church is the world’s largest Christian sect, right at the top of the world. Do you think they’d wish for ‘the Christian age to end from now on’?”

“Ah…”

Kamijou finally understood it.

In this age, a person with a higher status wouldn’t want changes to happen; this was even more so for the people at the top.

“The Roman Catholic Church never wanted to have The Book of the Law as a weapon. They want to conquer the world, and not destroy it.” Kamijou and Index remained silent.

The night seemed to get even darker.

“So, they decided to secretly eliminate Orsola Aquinas, the only one who has a chance of getting that power. But Orsola seems to have realized this, and tried her best to get to a place where the Roman Catholic Church has no stronghold in: Japan. Ironically, she arrived at the same time as when The Book of the Law was shipped here. After arriving in Japan, she tried her best to meet up with the local Christian group, which is us, the Amakusa. Finally, we agreed to help her.”

Tatemiya sighed heavily, and said,

“The Book of the Law being stolen was just a bluff by the Roman Catholic Church? How can we steal it? They did this to come up with some connection between Orsola’s disappearance and The Book of the Law. When the two disappear, everyone will agree that the kidnappers’ objective is to decipher The Book of the Law. But if she were the only one who disappeared, some would

think of other possibilities like ‘She’s running away from the Roman Catholic Church to save herself.’”

Good and evil, attack and defend, abduct and rescue…

Everything was reversed in Kamijou’s view.

“Now, can you people say that the Roman Catholics are the good guys? Are you able to confidently say that Orsola Aquinas will be fine the moment she’s handed over to them? Don’t you have a single trace of suspicion?”

“…”

“If you’re still unconvinced, tell me what you're basing your beliefs on. Otherwise, face that suspicion in your heart seriously! Think about it; anyone can understand who the enemy is now!”

Hearing Tatemiya Saiji’s growls, Kamijou breathed deeply, and closed his eyes.

He sorted through every single piece of information in his head, and thought through every argument.

He thought carefully.

Which was saying the truth: the Roman Catholics or the Amakusa?

Was there anything amiss?

“No, I still can’t trust you.”

“…Why?”

“If what you said is true,”

Kamijou slowly said,

“Why did Orsola run away from you guys? The first time I met her, she was walking all the way to Academy City. At that time, Stiyl said that there had been a huge skirmish between the Roman Catholics and the Amakusa, and Orsola had run away from both sides’ control during the chaos. If what you said is true, why did she run away?”

He continued,

“Your words may be false. Even if what you say is true, the enemy of the enemy doesn’t mean they're my friend. So, right now, you must tell me: why did Orsola run away from you guys?”

If the Amakusa were really Orsola’s friends, why had she run?

Hearing Kamijou voice his argument, Tatemiya just smiled slightly.

It was weak, as if he had given up on life.

“You’re all the same.”

“What same?”

“She’s the same as you right now. She approached us first… but in the end, she was still unable to trust us completely. She must be thinking, ‘These people have no reason to save me and go against the world’s largest religious sect, the Roman Catholic Church. They must be thinking that we’ll use the key to reading The Book of the Law as payment.’”

Kamijou remained silent.

Tatemiya seemed to be looking at Kamijou, and yet seemed to be looking at something far away.

“That’s ridiculous. Why do we need The Book of the Law?”

“Then, why did you save Orsola?”

Kamijou cautiously asked.

Tatemiya replied without hesitation,

“Do we need a reason?”

He then continued,

“There’s no reason from the beginning. This is how the Amakusa does things, especially for our generation. You’re asking why our Priestess is able to be our

leader at such a young age? In order to fulfill a child's wish, she dared to go against an evil dragon that can swallow a mountain. In order to fulfill the dying leader's wish, she was willing to protect a small village against thousands of enemies. Along the way, we were walking in her shadow. Although the time in which she led us was short, to us, it's eternal."

The way Tatemiya said this, it was like he was reminiscing the old days.

And it was like he was praising his family members.

"Because of her, we're able to walk onto the path of righteousness; we're not being led astray, and we don't abuse our power. While it's easy to just say it, she taught this through action. She used her actions to show that humans can be strong and benevolent, that doing this isn't difficult."

For quite some time, everyone remained silent.

Finally, Tatemiya broke the silence by gnashing his teeth.

"…But we ruined her life."

"What?"

"It's our deaths and immaturity that hurt the Priestess. Everyone around her died, and only she was alive. She thinks that it's all her responsibility... What a joke! Fighting alongside her on the battlefield is our wish, being beaten on the battlefield is our incompetence, and we have to be responsible for all of it. But in the end, after this outcome, she willingly left her home despite it not being her fault."

Tatemiya sounded bitter, as if there was a knife poking through his face.

There was touching emotions flowing from this resentful speech that was barely squeezing from his throat.

"Our immaturity robbed her of her home, so we need to give her back a home. In this home, we'll fight to prevent anyone from getting hurt or pained or losing their smile. In this home, we can unite everyone's strength to protect just one person's happiness and not be swayed. So when Orsola Aquinas came to us for help, we agreed. A group that'll do this willingly is a suitable home for her."

In other words, they were a group that wouldn’t fight for power or profit. They fought for themselves, without desiring any benefits.

But it was hard for anyone to understand their motives, so Orsola misunderstood all that.

Of course, Tatemiya’s words didn’t seem to be true yet.

Kamijou really wanted to trust him, but there wasn’t any proof. To trust him, he had to have proof to verify it. Kamijou gnashed his teeth. Which side was saying the truth? Which side was saying a lie? Kamijou tried to compute this in his head.

Right at that moment, there was a loud scream from afar.

No, a "scream" simply wasn’t enough to describe it.

A blood-curdling cry, a screech, a wail. If one were to describe it, it could barely be called a "lady’s scream". But Kamijou wasn’t certain that that was the scream of a human. It sounded like a sharp scratch on a piece of glass or a blackboard that made people feel weird when they heard it. But in the voice, there was a shocking amount of human emotions mixed in. Fear, rejection, despair, and pain; a large number of emotions began to pour out like a sponge saturated with mud water being squeezed.

Index looked at Kamijou, but Kamijou didn’t look back.

“Or… sola?”

“Let me confirm something with you guys… did you tell her that you’re handing her over to the Roman Catholic Church? I believe she trusts you, and not the Roman Catholics?”

“…”

This reminded Kamijou of his conversation with Orsola a while back.

“May I confirm it again. You’re here to help on request from the Anglican Church, right?”

—Why had Orsola Aquinas asked that question so carefully?

“Yeah.”

—Why had she look relieved upon hearing his words?

“In other words, you’re here on the Anglican Church's instructions, and not the Roman Catholic Church's, right?”

—She had even tried to confirm it again.

“Eh… it’s not really that formal. Ah, let me clarify first, I can’t help you do anything for the Anglican Church, since I’m a resident of Academy City.”

—A seemingly meaningless reply had seemed to make her feel relieved.

“I… see.”

—How many thoughts were involved in that sentence?

Up until now, she had always trusted Kamijou Touma.

She had always thought that Kamijou Touma was someone that could be relied on.

“…Damn it.”

Kamijou gnashed his teeth, and turned to look at the direction of that cry's origin.

Come to think of it, when Kamijou had first met her, he should have risked his life to bring her back to Academy City. She'd have been a lot safer if he had done that.

“What the hell, what on earth is going on?”

“Don’t panic, it’s not a cry she'd make before she dies. There are rules in the Roman Catholic Church that they can’t kill Orsola Aquinas here; I can attest to that.”

“What?”

“In other words, we can still save her as long as we move quickly. But she’ll be in danger if we continue to dilly-dally. The situation is really urgent. It doesn’t matter if you don’t trust me; leave our grudges aside! Right now, the most important thing is to ensure Orsola’s safety! Even if we are still enemies!”

Tatemiya shouted frantically, indicating that they couldn’t delay any longer.

“But you must promise me, bring Orsola Aquinas back from the Roman Catholics! Bring her somewhere where the Roman Catholic Church can’t find her!”

Tatemiya looked serious.

That even made Kamijou feel uncertain.

At that moment…

Footsteps could be heard. Kamijou turned to look at where these footsteps were coming from. Two nuns wearing black robes came from the darkness. They were most likely Roman Catholics. One of them was tall, while the other was short. The tall one was carrying a large carriage wheel that was much larger than a round table, while the short one had four leather bags hanging on her waist belt. The bags were rattling around, and they seemed to be filled with coins or something like that. The bags were about as large as softballs, and if coins were put in them, each would probably be as heavy as the ball used in a shot put.

The taller nun took out an old leather-covered notebook, and flipped open its contents, checking it. She then nodded, and walked towards Kamijou. It seemed like there was a photo of him inside.

“You’re the assistant that’s not affiliated with us, right? Please hand over the leader of the heretics to us. The enemy of God is… him, right?”

Before the tall nun finished speaking, the shorter nun walked towards Tatemiya, who was covered with rune cards.

The four bags on her waists started to rattle continuously.

“Ah, wait a moment.”

Kamijou shouted, but the short girl didn’t seem to hear. She was about to pull Tatemiya, but froze, and didn't do so. She then circled around Tatemiya a few times, examining the rune cards covering him.

And the tall nun’s eyes were now staring at Kamijou.

“Is there a problem?”

“Before you leave, I'd like to see Orsola.”

“I’m sorry, but we cannot grant your request. Although Orsola is safe right now, it’s not completely safe when the enemy’s power isn’t clear. In this situation, we’ll have to follow the regulations and think of her safety. We’ll send a letter of invitation to you when she returns to Rome.”

A perfect, flawless answer.

This made Kamijou even more suspicious.

“No, I can’t comply with that. What was that scream all about? That was Orsola screaming, right? You said that she’s protected right now, so why would a person being protected let out that kind of scream? Anyway, I want to have one last look, just one, and say a few words. There shouldn’t be a problem, right? We won’t meet in quite a while, so let me do this as a final farewell, okay?”

“But according to the regulations…”

“Come on! Do you have to be so fussy about the regulations? Where’s Agnese? I’ll ask her directly.”

Kamijou placed his hand on her shoulder, and pushed her aside.

“…”

The tall nun looked down, like she was helpless against a guy who caused people to worry all the time. She grabbed the large wheel on her back, and placed it in front of her like a shield.

Suddenly, Index looked worried—

“No! Touma—!!”

Before the girl’s shout finished, *BAM!*, the carriage wheel exploded.

“…!”

In an instant, Kamijou didn’t understand what happened. Several thousand pieces of shrapnel flew towards him at an alarming velocity like a shotgun. Sensing this, he used his arms to protect his head and chest. Then, numerous pieces of shrapnel hit his arms, legs, and stomach. Just when he felt pain, his feet left the ground. Ping Piang! He was knocked back about five to six meters.

Index let out a short scream.

From the corner of his eye, Kamijou saw Tatemiya desperately trying to stand up, but the flames of the runes burned up several strands of hair on his head, causing him to not dare to act rashly. He grimaced in pain like a dog being yanked by the chain on its neck.

The shorter nun seemed to panic. She looked at the taller nun, and said,

“Sis-Sister Lucia! Is… is… is this really alright? Didn’t Sister Agnese say that we have to avoid conflicts against our guests?”

“Shut up, Sister Angelene! Damn, this is why I proposed to not allow the outsiders to act on their own, and we should chase them away quickly! All the blame will have to go to that Agnese, giving such a naïve order to leave them alone. Now she’s really given me quite a fix…”

Having been given a glare from the taller nun, the short nun didn’t dare to talk back. The tall nun then muttered to herself, trying to calm herself down.

Her expression changed. Although the change was rather abstract, he could feel it. The tall nun stared at Kamijou, her two eyes reminding him of hot, melting butter.

Kamijou was surprised. He couldn’t believe that she was one of the nuns who had given him bread and soup at the camp.

“If this guy wasn’t suspicious about that scream, this'd be so much simpler…

Damn it, what have I done wrong? I've been touched on the shoulder by a non-believer! Sister Angelene! Quick! Get me some soap- no, some sanitizer! This is too much! Damn it! Tell me the next time you want to talk to me! I have to wear the mud-blocking apron!"

The tall nun was beginning to look flushed.

Her head was swaying about, but her tone was abnormally monotonous.

"Irritating things just come along one after another! This is unbearable. I'll set it up such that it looks like you guys were killed by the Amakusa. Hm, this should be the easiest way to go. After that, I'll kill them off; that'll be perfect." The tall nun looked like she was standing on a stage and saying lines from a flawed script.

Hearing such a terrifying thing, Kamijou was unable to reply.

As the shrapnel were just numerous pieces of wood and not sharp knives, the wounds were rather shallow.

But those pieces of shrapnel that had gotten under his skin suddenly vibrated.

"KWA-AAAAAAAAAAA!!!"

Kamijou screamed. Pieces of shrapnel popped out of his flesh like an axe being pulled out from a tree trunk. The shrapnel, now stained with blood, returned to the nun's hand like they were being pulled away with a magnet. They came together like a jigsaw puzzle being pieced together, forming back to the carriage wheel.

"Touma!"

Index cried, and frantically tried to get back to him, but the tall nun turned and glared at her, shouting,

"Sister Angelene!"

"Ah, yes!"

The petite nun uttered, hurriedly pulled off the four bags of coins on her waist,

and threw them above herself. The bags suddenly gave off a loud sound like a large piece of cloth being slapped onto a wall. Also, each bag sprouted six sharp wings like those of a swallow. The four bags radiated different colors: red, blue, yellow, green.

“Viene. Una persona dodici apostli. Lo schiavo basso che rovina rovina un mago mentre e quelli che raccolgono. (Come out, one of the twelve apostles, tax collector and lowly servant of the eradicating magician.)”

The petite nun raised both her hands high, as if she was hugging the sky.

In an instant, *Shua!*, the green coin bag flew past Index like a bullet, and slammed at her feet. It splits the ground like a sturdy root, and created a rattling sound.

“Damn it… ah?”

Index was about to retreat, but she tripped. Looking closely, the rope seal of the coin bag that had slammed onto the ground unraveled itself, and tied Index’s legs. Just when Index was looking at her feet, the remaining three coin bags flew up into the air and out of her range of vision.

Kamijou went pale instantly.

No…! If those things hit her!

The coin bags were likely heavier than the metal balls used in a shot put competition. Index, whose legs were tied up, would definitely be unable to escape, and she couldn’t possibly block the attack with her hands.

“Damn it! INDEX!”

Kamijou shouted, and attempted to get back to Index. Luckily, the coin bag that was tied to Index’s feet must be controlled by magic. It would release itself the moment Kamijou hit it with his right fist.

At that moment…

“You should worry about yourself, and try thinking about how to make yourself die a not-so-painful death.”

Looking around, the tall nun carrying the large carriage wheel was floating above him. The center of the wheel was aimed at Kamijou like the barrel of a gun as he stumbled on his way.

—!?

Kamijou trembled until his throat went dry. Punching the wheel with his right hand, and the wheel exploding; no matter how anyone looked at it, the former would definitely be slower.

“O non-believer, have you heard of ‘The Legend of the Wheel’?”

The tall nun laughed madly, like she was intoxicated,

“Since ancient times, many Saints were martyred or executed stupidly by those in power. In this history full of torture and executions, the shadow of a wheel can be seen.”

Kamijou didn't want to listen to her nonsense, but the wheel in front of him was restricting his movements. During this time, the three coin bags may be plummeting towards Index from several meters above.

“These wheels have several nails or blades that can slice and dice Saints up. But in many legends, the wheel mysteriously explodes the moment it touches a Saint, like St. George who subdued a dragon or St. Catherine of Alexandria. Notably, when St. Catherine was executed, the shrapnel of the exploded wheel even killed the four thousand people who were there watching her execution. The significance of this ‘Wheel Legend’ is…”

The tall nun said this rather slowly, which made Kamijou even more panicky. The three coin bags that were aimed at Index would come flying down at the speed of a cannonball, and smash her head apart.

Seeing Kamijou so nervous that he was sweating, the tall nun couldn’t help but smirk from behind the wheel.

“The innocent are not punished, and the guilty are... Realize this now, non-believer; your end has come. Stupid Sister Orsola will be executed once the special ‘procedures’ are complete, but killing you guys won’t be such a hassle.”

“Peh…”

Kamijou's thoughts were occupied on Index who was all tied up, wondering what he could do to save her. At that moment, the wheel in front of him started to crack. As if time had slowed down, with the central axis of the wheel as the vertex, the wheel started to split into six equal pieces like a pizza, and rapidly expanded outwards.

“Woo… OOOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!!!”

Kamijou clenched his right fist, and roared. But it was too late, he couldn’t make it. Before Kamijou’s fist was raised, the wheel in the tall nun’s hand had already given off a loud sound.

BAM!, the wheel flew sideways.

Of course, this wasn’t what the tall nun wanted, neither was it the doing of the boy’s right fist.

It was the coin bags.

The red six-winged coin bag that was originally aimed at Index’s head slammed into the executioner wheel with a stunning speed. The impact caused the wheel to fly out of the tall nun’s hand, and after bouncing several times on the ground, it rolled into the darkness. The bag was also damaged, as coins of different sizes flew out of the bag. It was unknown which country they were from, though.

The tall nun who had lost her weapon frantically landed from above Kamijou’s head, and pulled distance from him. She then glared at the petite nun.

“Sister Angelene! You—!!”

“No… It’s not me…”

The tall nun growled like a wild animal while the petite nun, now pale with fright, frantically explained.

“C T R T T O P A O (The remaining three, gather at one spot, and stick together).”

At that moment, Index's clear voice rang out…

The next moment…

PA!, the sound of metal bending echoed through the air. The rope seal of the green coin bag that was tying up Index's feet unraveled. Together with the blue and yellow bags, the green bag went flying towards the petite girl at a terrifying speed.

The three bags collided two centimeters in front of Angelene's nose, and stopped. The giant pressure caused several hundred pieces of coins to coagulate into one large lump of metal. *Dong!*, it landed near the petite nun's feet.

The petite nun gave a stiff yet mysterious smile as she landed on her butt.

"The bags of gold represent Matthew, one of the Twelve Apostles. He once beat two fire dragons using just the cross and prayer. Infusing Telesma into the coin bags can change them into aerial weapons that will automatically lock on to enemies."

Index calmly gave her cruel evaluation.

"But the method is too crude. The chant is too long, and it's not really a secret code. You don't care about your surroundings as you focus too much on casting it, so you'll get stopped easily."

Kamijou was completely unaware of what was going on. Index should have been unable to use magic. It was unknown how she was able to hijack the petite girl's spell and control it.

"…Using the enemy's spell through a self-destruct or wrong direction?"

The tall nun looked around her, smacked her mouth, and readied herself. Losing her weapon didn't dampen her fighting spirit. She slowly drew a cross in front of her chest.

At that moment, a sharp whistle sound came from afar.

TWEET—!, it was like the cry of a bird.

The tall nun heard this, and angrily turned to look at the night sky.

“It’s a retreat order! Sister Angelene!”

“Ah… eh…? But… but we… haven’t beaten the enemy yet…”

“We’ll talk after we retreat. It seems that the remnants of the Amakusa are being released by the Anglican. Working on our own will affect the entire team’s operations, and even Orsola’s delivery. To us, that’s a much more serious problem.”

The tall nun ran into the darkness, and the petite nun followed suit.

“Now you understand?”

Tatemiya Saiji looked at the night sky, and reluctantly said,

“This is what the Roman Catholic Church, the world’s largest Christian sect, does beneath the surface.”

Part 2

“I see. No wonder Orsola Aquinas looked like everything was lost when she saw Agnese Sanctis. Separating us from the Roman Catholics was because they looked down on us from the beginning. Humph… adding in the Anglicans will cause the command chain to go chaotic; it’s all an excuse.”

Stiyl said this after walking out of the Parallel Sweets Park. He had also heard Orsola’s scream, but hadn’t turned to ask Agnese what it was all about. Maybe he didn’t know the reasons or didn’t want to take rash action and cause relations between the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church to become strained. Either way, Kamijou didn’t understand Stiyl’s actions.

Kamijou had just ran to see Agnese, but they had retreated, and there was no one left. No one even picked up Tatemiya. Maybe they thought that the Amakusa

was dissolved now that they had captured most of them.

The fact that a group with so many people was able to retreat so cleanly made Kamijou freeze up. The fact that they never left the Anglicans a note showed that they had never trusted them in the first place. Maybe to the Roman Catholics, getting Orsola back was their priority, and it wouldn't hurt them if they didn't take care of Tatemiya and the rest. Or maybe the Roman Catholics were gathering their forces that were scattered in the city, intending to use overwhelming force to wipe them out.

Right now, the quartet- Kamijou, Index, Stiyl, and Tatemiya- were exchanging information. On a side note, as Kamijou had been hit by the shrapnel of the wheel, he was covered with bandages everywhere.

"If what this man said is true, Orsola Aquinas isn't in immediate danger. The Roman Catholic Church has a set of regulations… so, Kamijou Touma, don't immediately go in and try to deal with them. Your meddling will make the situation get even more out of hand."

Being warned, Kamijou twisted his mouth, and said,

"…What regulations?"

"Touma, the Roman Catholic Church is the world's largest sect. Although most of the believers have no involvement in magic, they do have two billion believers led by the Pope and 141 Cardinals, and there are parishes in 131 countries— they're a large group. Although being big isn't a bad thing, being too big can cause some problems."

Kamijou was still confused after hearing all this, and tilted his head. At that moment, Tatemiya explained,

"Basically, there might be several factions. There are already 142 of these factions in the parishes that the Pope and the Cardinals lead. Including the Nationals and the local customs, there's 207 of them. If we consider the generation gap between the young and old, there's 252 of them."

Stiyl impatiently blew a puff of white smoke, and said,

"For the Roman Catholic Church, which has so many factions, the enemies

within far outnumber those outside, so they’re extremely careful about settling this. Although decoding The Book of the Law would be extremely threatening to the Roman Catholic Church, Orsola Aquinas herself has done no wrong. If they were to kill her like that, Agnese would be viewed as an enemy by all of her other comrades.”

“Yeah? But we also haven’t done anything wrong, right? They’re still willing to attack us without hesitation.”

Kamijou gently prodded the bandage on his arm with his fingers. The summer night was so hot already, and it was too much for him to have to put on all the bandages.

“The situation is different for non-believers and heretics. Do you know how many people in the past were killed based on a single sentence ‘Any sinner who disobeys the Word of God must be judged’?”

“The two nuns that attacked us most probably have this sort of thinking as well. But in other words, it means that they can’t execute Orsola anyhow, for ‘those who believe in the Word of God shall not kill’.”

“…”

Kamijou looked away, and looked at the tree under the streetlight. A concern appeared in his head.

If the Roman Catholic Church had a rule that "one cannot kill a comrade within the Roman Catholic Church", why did the Amakusa need to step up and "prevent Orsola from getting killed"?

When Kamijou raised this question, Stiyl casually replied,

“The answer is simple: because there’s an exception.”

“Exception?”

“That’s right. Although there’s the rule that ‘one cannot kill a comrade within the Roman Catholic Church’… those that are chased out of the Church are considered ‘people who disobey the Word of God’, so it’d be alright to kill them.”

Tatemiya walked behind Stiyl, carrying his extremely large sword. Kamijou was worried; if that sword were seen by the police, how were they going to explain it?

“Sinners, witches, disillusioned believers… these people who did something wrong would be chased out of the Church, and tagged as ‘Antichrists’.”

“Setting Orsola up is actually very simple; they just need to give her a ‘test’. Like, say, forcing her to hold a hot metal rod. If she’s innocent, God will protect her and not let her get hurt. But if she gets hurt, it means that she’s a sinner that God feels isn’t worth saving. Sounds funny, doesn't it? Among us Anglicans, we call this the ‘Trial of Sin’. We see it as a test, a trial that tests a person’s faith in God. It’s now banned.”

“This is ridiculous…!”

Kamijou shouted,

“It’s obvious the person will be burned! It’s impossible not to!”

“That’s right. So, even if they aren’t burnt, they’ll still be guilty, as they’ll be seen as being protected by the devil. No matter the outcome, the victim will have the bad luck of being labeled a witch.”

Kamijou thought that this was too much.

Using such a stupid method to decide Orsola’s future was unreasonable.

“However, on the other hand, while the prosecution of this religious- or holy-trial is pending, the Roman Catholics can't kill Orsola. According to proper procedures, they have to return to Rome, and spend another two to three days doing all this. In other words, besides killing her, any other action is allowed.”

The Roman Catholic Church didn't care of how she thought or how she felt going up against the original copy of The Book of the Law. Because it was too tiresome, unnecessary, bothersome, impossible to solve, and they didn’t want to add on to their worry; they decided to kill for these stupid reasons.

The beliefs of Orsola and the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church should be the same.

Their thoughts weren't different. Both sides felt that The Book of the Law was something dangerous, and decided to take action to solve this problem. Orsola tried to decode the book in order to find a way to destroy an Original-class book when ordinary people thought that it was impossible.

She just wanted to make some contribution.

Because she was more aware of the potent threat of The Book of the Law, she couldn't leave it alone. It was just that simple.

"Do you know what kind of thing an Original grimoire is? Do you know that one can't destroy an Original through any means?"

-Is this wrong?

"With our spells now, we can't destroy any grimoire. The most we can do is seal it and not allow others to read it."

—For what reason is Orsola Aquinas being treated like this?

"However, 'being unable to do so now' doesn't mean that it can't be done in the future."

—What wrong did she do that would make the higher ups decide on the procedures through a unique trial and make her suffer silently without anyone helping her?

"We can use it on the grimoire itself to destroy the magic circle."

—No!

"The power of a grimoire isn't going to give anyone happiness, and it'll only bring about war. So, I've been analyzing this book, hoping to destroy the Original."

—Definitely not!

"I can't accept this…"

Kamijou gnashed his molars tightly, almost breaking them.

“Even if there’s a reason or difficulty, I won’t allow that to happen! What kind of sick joke is this!? What do these people treat human lives as!? Taking away something precious from someone one by one through procedures? WHAT DO THESE PEOPLE TREAT OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES AS!?”

Kamijou Touma had lost his memories before.

So, what he had was very little. He only had memories of the previous month, during the summer holidays, so what he cared about was only a small percentage of an ordinary high school student's. Most of his memories were built on "hiding his memory loss", and he could break down anytime.

Even so, even if Kamijou was so empty inside, he would go berserk if anyone unwisely took away anything he cherished.

Maybe the Roman Catholic Church was trying to protect what they cherished, so they had to give this order.

But this wasn’t right.

Having a group of people watch and snatch something a person cherished in front of him, this wasn’t right.

Why couldn’t they try another method?

Why must they choose to do something as easy yet as stupid as "kill"?

Kamijou clenched both his fists until they were about to bleed. On the street under the midnight darkness, the scattered light of the streetlamps coldly shined on him.

“…Where are they? Do you know?”

“I can guess. Why do you ask this?”

Stiyl calmly asked. Kamijou couldn’t help but grab his collar, asking him why he could remain so calm.

Facing the furious look on Kamijou’s face, Stiyl elegantly shook the cigarette in his mouth. However, Index, who was outside Kamijou’s vision, was scared stiff.

“I understand your feelings.”

Stiyl slowly puffed out white smoke, and said,

“But you better calm down. They have almost 250 comrades in this city alone. Can you beat them all with just a single fist?”

“…!”

Kamijou clenched his fist tightly.

That's right.

Kamijou was clear about it. His combat capability was about equal to that of a delinquent fighting in the alleys. He would probably win if it was one-on-one, but he couldn’t guarantee that if it was one-on-two, and it was impossible for him if it was one-on-three. That nun who wielded that large carriage wheel had been able to beat through Kamijou’s resistance with just one attack.

In real life, bare-handed fighting wasn’t like those movies, where one man single-handedly beat several people from the front. No matter how good the fighter was, he couldn’t win if the number of enemies was more than what he could handle; this was a cruel and harsh rule.

Except…

They were like those real fighters depicted in manga or serial dramas… and the magicians were like these fighters.

But the magician just stood around and laughed, puffed out white smoke, and said,

“Anyway, if the report given by the Amakusa is true, we can’t interfere by any means. Too bad; this case is over.”

“What… did you say?”

“Think about it. To put this bluntly, isn’t Agnese Sanctis chasing Orsola Aquinas because Orsola had gone against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church? Since The Book of the Law is still kept within the Vatican, the Roman Catholics

can’t use it for evil purposes; and since the Amakusa declared that they don’t intend to use The Book of the Law for evil purposes, does the Anglican Church have any reason to butt in now? Are you going to blame them for not saying goodbye to them and angrily dispute with them?”

This time, Kamijou grabbed Stiyl Magnus’s collar without hesitation.

Index tried to lower her volume as she exclaimed. Tatemiya just stared at Kamijou and whistled.

The rune magician, however, remained unmoved. In this lonely midnight, only his voice was echoing through the neighborhood. The flashing lights seemed to flicker as they shined on his face.

“This is something amongst the Roman Catholics, and they can only solve it with their own regulations. Since this situation won’t affect the outside world, the Anglican Church can’t interfere, or we’d be seen as interfering with internal politics, and there would then be conflict between England and Rome… so give up, Kamijou Touma. Don’t tell me you’re willing to start a war just to save her?”

“…This…”

“No matter whether it’s Anglicans or Roman Catholics, most of the believers aren’t fighters like us. These people go to school, meet some friends, buy a burger; all that is what they feel the world is about. They don’t know that magicians are running around in the dark, and they don’t know all these organisations that are arranging deals with each other to prevent a magical war. They’re like kind, harmless lambs with no power.”

The magician, who was being grabbed by the collar, calmly explained.

Like a devil that was forcing someone to sign a contract.

“Let me ask you: do you want to get these people involved? These people don’t know the truth, and only belong to the Anglican Church or the Roman Catholic Church. You want to get these people involved in a war, get them looted, get them killed, or even have them lose everything, all for a single Orsola Aquinas?”

“…”

The hand grabbing Stiyl's collar gradually released. Index opened her mouth, wanting to say something, but finally sighed.

This was the difference between a specialist and a layman.

This was the difference between a person and a group.

Stiyl indifferently spit the cigarette onto the ground, stepped on it to extinguish it, and looked at Tatemiya.

"I have no power to stop you. You're free to rescue Orsola, your client, or your subordinates. But you can only go on your own; don't drag the Anglican Church along. If you do, even if I have to burn the entire island into ash, I'll kill every single Amakusa member."

Hearing Stiyl's threat, Tatemiya expression didn't change.

"I understand that without you telling me. That boy down there, you don't have to despair. Although the Anglican Church has no reason to start a war, I do. Right now, we're going to their main base, save my comrades, and save Orsola at the same time. Don't worry; fighting against a large but weak organization that has some elites is our specialty. Our group was established during the Bakumou era, after all."

Hearing these words, Kamijou looked up.

Index, who was beside Tatemiya, looked at him and asked,

"You're going to call the Amakusa members in your base to come here as well? But the special teleportation magic only works after one day. By that time, the Roman Catholics would have left Japan already."

"You're right; although this is safe, it's not practical."

Tatemiya replied, swinging the white longsword. Stiyl coldly asked,

"You're going there alone?"

"Since that's the only option, I can only do this. Luckily, those idiots from our clan haven't been executed… if they wanted to kill them, they would have done

so at the beginning and not carried them along. Maybe the Roman Catholic Church wants them to stand trial together with Orsola so that the crime of Orsola teaming up with the Amakusa to steal The Book of the Law will be even more convincing. If so, as long as I release them and do something behind the scenes, we might have a chance."

Tatemiya used a delighted expression to hide his nervousness inside.

"I'll choose to take action when they move."

He swung the blade around, saying,

"We, the Amakusa, are used to being chased, so we know the strengths and weaknesses of a large organization. The weakness of a large group is when they're moving; there'll definitely be one when hundreds of individuals are moving. Think about it: the Roman Catholic members and the Amakusa number more than 300; you can't move that many Christians at the same time. When several hundred nuns dressed in black robes are walking on the streets, people will think there's a protest, and even the media will come over to interview them. So, they'll use some kind of disguise. Maybe they'll split up into several groups and move on their own. During this time, it'll be impossible for them to retain their original fighting strength, and it'll be the best time to attack."

According to Tatemiya, the Roman Catholics were not like the Amakusa, who used magic to move about. But it was too late to arrange for a boat or a plane. So they would probably wait until daylight, when the harbor or airport was open, before they moved out.

"…"

The best time to strike was when they were moving.

But in other words, it meant that they could only move when the Roman Catholics moved.

Stiyl had said that they had to follow a religious procedure and trial before they could execute her.

But he had also mentioned that they could do anything else besides killing her.

In a certain sense, having 250 carry out cruel violence against Orsola was even scarier than the procedures. As there was no clear guidelines on what they could and couldn't do, the boundary was rather gray.

Anything went as long as she didn’t die?

They could do anything they wanted as long as she was breathing?

Kamijou’s face darkened. Tatemiya understood his concern, and said,

“…Although you may not forgive us for this, I hope you understand that we’re powerless in certain situations.”

Tatemiya’s voice hinted at a deep frustration. Being a magician, he was more aware than an outsider like Kamijou on what would happen to the people caught by the Roman Catholic Church.

Kamijou Touma swung a punch at an electric pole nearby.

He could imagine what was happening right now, but he couldn’t do anything. Kamijou felt really useless right now.

Stiyl coldly said to Kamijou, who was speechless right now,

“Seems like we have a common agreement. Then, we’ll disperse here and find some place to hide. I’ll have to contact my superiors and ask them what to do. The situation between the Anglican Church and the Amakusa is settled, but I’ll have to prepare to settle the situation with Kanzaki. Kamijou Touma, you and Index are to head back to Academy City. The Roman Catholics should be busy dealing with their important person, and probably won’t provoke a war with the science side by attacking you.”

At this moment, Stiyl lit a cigarette.

“Unless the Anglican Church can come up with a valid reason for saving Orsola Aquinas, we won’t step in.”

He puffed out some white smoke, seemingly uninterested deep inside.

“Ah, yeah, Kamijou Touma, I’d like to ask you something.”

“What?”

Kamijou tiredly turned around, Stiyl revealed a mocking smile, and asked,

“That Cross I gave you, it doesn’t seem to be with you… Where did you leave it?”

“…”

Kamijou thought about it for a while, and recalled that,

“Sorry, I gave that to Orsola. When I helped her with putting it on, she was rather happy. Is that something precious?”

“No, that’s an ordinary metal cross. It’s likely manufactured in a village that specialises in mass-producing gifts. Like that St. George Cross, it’s a common sight in England; even the national flag has it.”

For some reason, Stiyl’s smile contained a trace of delight.

“That cross has no decorative or antique value, and has to be useful in your hand… never mind. It doesn’t matter since you’re not going to use it now.”

Stiyl said this with a hidden meaning, puffing out white smoke at the same time.

Kamijou was obviously confused, and could only walk back into the darkness.

Just like that, this boring event ended with a boring outcome.

Part 3

Tatemiya Saiji had left.

Stiyl seemed intent on escorting Index back to Academy City. Kamijou dejectedly walked under the night sky. Index wanted to comfort him, but she didn’t know what to say.

Although this was the capital of Japan, the night away from the center of the city was still dark. It was past one in the morning; most of the lights in the city were out. Lights could be seen from the windows of the apartments, like an incomplete set of teeth. There would occasionally be taxis driving past them, carrying drunkards inside. The streetlights continued to shine, attracting numerous flies to them.

The days full of battle were about to be over. In a few hours, his daily life would consist mostly of school. Kamijou would bring his tired brain along to school, listen to some boring lessons, talk nonsense with Tsuchimikado and Aogami, and get electrocuted by Mikoto because he had infuriated her by not completing his punishment—holiday assignments.

“What should I do?”

Kamijou muttered.

Index heard this, and looked at Kamijou. But Kamijou still looked down.

He really wanted to help Orsola Aquinas.

But he couldn’t think of any way to help her.

“As an amateur, I can’t possibly beat an expert no matter what I do; I understand that. But an outsider should be able to turn the situation, right? Like the first time when I met Orsola, I should have brought her to Academy City. Or not help the Roman Catholics, and allow the Amakusa to escape with the special teleportation spell.”

“Touma…”

“I understand; I didn’t see the consequences of these options, so I was hopeful. Even if Orsola escaped to Academy City, the Roman Catholics would invade Academy City to hunt her down. Even if we didn’t help the Roman Catholics, they can use human wave tactics to form a perimeter and find out where the Amakusa gather. No matter what, the result is the same. I’m clear on this.”

Kamijou Touma thought.

The first time he had met Orsola Aquinas, she had sounded perturbed when she

asked him how to get to Academy City. When she had smiled in the theme park, it was because she had found a friend she could trust that she had continued to talk.

Also…

That cry full of despair that had come from nowhere.

“But… really. What should I really do that’ll be right?”

Kamijou understood that him thinking like this showed that he was an amateur who lacked a sense of danger. The situation was completely unrelated to him. A high school student had gotten a rather harsh insight into the magical world, and was about to return to his own world; it was just that simple. Nobody could blame him. Anyone could see that the magical world was dangerous and scary, and to see a common civilian like Kamijou come back would be a huge relief for them.

Maybe Stiyl had already said what he wanted to say a while back that he remained silent about Kamijou’s accusations.

In the meantime, Index turned to look at Kamijou’s face, and said,

“…Touma, this is an issue between magicians; you don’t have to blame yourself. I can’t help out, so I can’t say anything much, but since Tatemiya Saiji said that he’ll handle this on his own, we can only rely on him…”

“…Really?”

“Yeah. The law never said that you have to settle every conflict between magicians. I have to be blamed for being unable to take on a magician. But even without Touma, there’ll be a solution to the problem. As an outsider, Touma has already met quite a number of magicians. But the world has many more that you don’t know of, and these people have their own problems. Even without your help, they’re able to settle these problems on their own; it’s the same as now. This is only the first time that you aren’t involved with the final events.”

“I see.”

Kamijou gave a machine-like answer, but he was feeling quite surprised deep

inside. Index should be able to imagine what would happen to Orsola, so why was she telling him to not interfere with the situation any further?

Maybe it was because…

There was no way to comfort him besides saying something that contradicted his feelings?

“Hm, the previous situations can be considered abnormal. Nobody can solve every problem in front of them. Touma, you should learn to rely on others, and let others settle the problems. Even if there’s a house on fire in front of you, and there’s an infant inside, you don’t have to rush in yourself. Asking others for help isn’t a shameful thing.”

Index continued on, trying to persuade Kamijou.

“Touma, you should rely more on others. Necessarius exists for this purpose. Even an organisation like us faces tough issues like these. If you can’t solve it on your own, who’ll blame you?”

“…”

He was not involved in this final scene. Maybe it was just like that. His part was over, but it didn’t mean that the scenario would suddenly end like this. Next, Tatemiya Saiji would be the lead and end it on his own.

It was true. Seeing a mass murderer commit a crime didn’t mean that the eyewitness had a duty to stop him. The eyewitness wouldn’t be condemned if the murderer was subdued by the police.

“Will Tatemiya succeed?”

“There is some chance since he’s a real magician, and the Amakusa, who’re used to being suppressed, are rather skilled in doing this. He won’t be stupid enough to try and take on an enemy when there’s no chance.”

“Un.”

Kamijou nodded his head.

He might as well mention it, Kamijou thought. Since the situation could be resolved without him getting involved, an outsider didn't need to get involved. It was a logical way of thinking. If an outsider who didn't know anything got involved, it was likely that the situation may get out of hand, so he might as well stay on the sidelines.

The law never decreed that Kamijou had to settle everything on his own.

From a larger point of view, there was a majority of scenarios that Kamijou wasn't involved in.

Even if he saw one, he didn't need to mind.

Even if Kamijou wasn't involved, someone would settle it.

Kamijou looked at the night sky, raised his hands, and stretched. The fatigue in his body was starting to build up, and at the same time, he was starting to miss the futon in his dormitory.

"Alright, let's go home."

Kamijou said.

Just this sentence alone created a segment between what was daily and what was non-daily.

"Oh, yeah, before we go home, I have to buy some things. At this time, the supermarkets and department stores should be closed, and there're only convenience stores open. But there's nothing in the fridge, got to buy some food… oh, well, I'm interested in what the convenience stores outside Academy City are selling. Maybe we can find bentos inside."

"…Touma, why are you so concerned with everyday life now?"

"I'm sorry, I'm an ordinary student who recently began to like remembering things."

"I feel like forgetting all this and eating a good meal."

"It's alright if you don't let me go; but there's only an empty tray and water for

breakfast. You have to think of the rest yourself.”

“Touma—!”

Index shouted out, not caring that it was the middle of a silent night.

Kamijou laughed upon seeing this gluttonous girl turn pale so easily.

“Alright, then I’ll be looking for a convenience store, and buy tomorrow’s breakfast along the way.”

“Hm? How about everyone go together?”

“If I bring you along, you’ll stuff everything you see into the basket, and it’ll be really difficult for me to buy things. I’ll be leaving for a while, so Stiyl, please bring Index back to Academy City. Since you can bring her out, you can probably bring her back in, right? Of course… with you being so carefree, I’m somewhat troubled.”

“Since it’s beneficial for her, I can grant your request.”

Stiyl shook the cigarette in his mouth, and said,

“However, do you know where it is?”

“…Finding a convenience store shouldn’t be too hard, right?”

“Very good.”

Stiyl gave a cynical smile, and brought Index back into the darkness of the night. Index wanted to accompany Kamijou, but he waved his hands profusely, indicating to her to not follow.

When those two disappeared, Kamijou turned around.

And headed down the road he had originally walked on.

“That guy seems to have noticed…”

Kamijou smacked his lips, and muttered to himself.

I left my wallet in the dormitory, so why would I go to a convenience store?

Kamijou pulled his cell phone from his pocket. The white light from the screen illuminated his face.

He pressed several buttons, and opened up the GPS satellite search map. Of course, the target wasn't a nearby convenience store. Kamijou thought of what Agnese Sanctis had said.

"Our specialty is that we have a lot of people. Our compatriots are in 110 countries throughout the world, and even in Japan, so there're many of our Church Ministries there. Also, we're building a new house of God called the 'Church of Orsola'. If I remember correctly, it's located near here. Once it's complete, it'll be the largest Church in Japan. It's about the size of a baseball stadium."

The GPS function of Academy City was extremely accurate and updated really fast. Besides the latest buildings, it would accurately display buildings that were about to be built. In contrast, old businesses that had closed, like the Twilight Theatre, would disappear quickly from the map.

Of course, the name of the construct that was about to be built wouldn't appear, as it would appear as "to be built" on the GPS. But it was easy to spot by looking at the image, as there was only one building as big as a baseball stadium.

"Yes. Orsola once went to three pagan countries to preach Christianity to them, therefore her contributions are large, so the superiors specially allowed a Church to be built in her name. Doesn't she speak Japanese really well?"

Kamijou looked at the image on his cell phone, and quickened his steps. Just like Agnese had said, the "Church of Orsola", the gathering point of the Roman Catholics, was in this city. Since moving in a large group was a weakness to that group, they would use the Church of Orsola nearby to act as a deport base. Although the building wasn't complete, it wasn't a problem to them because they had much more magic that Kamijou didn't know of.

The Roman Catholics should be there.

Including Agnese Sanctis and Orsola Aquinas.

“After the Church is built, we’ll be sending invitations. However, before this, let’s settle the problem before us and not let this bother us.”

Kamijou remembered that joke that Agnese had first made, and chuckled.

“Although the party isn’t set up, and the invitations may not be finished, I can’t wait.”

Since their objective was clear, he had no need to stop.

He walked faster, and unknowingly started running on the pitch-black road in the night.

He had no reason to get in and fight.

Even if he didn’t interfere, others would come in to settle it.

Index had said before: "Even if there’s a house on fire in front of him, and there’s an infant inside, the law doesn’t decree him to rush in and save the infant."

Asking others for help or letting others settle the problem wasn’t a bad thing.

But…

What if the infant left behind in the fire always believed that Kamijou would save him?

The smartest way was obviously to call the fire brigade.

But no matter how stupid it was, Kamijou was not willing to let the child see his back. Even to himself, when it was the safest method, Kamijou wasn’t willing to let down the child’s expectations.

Maybe up until now, Orsola Aquinas still believed in Kamijou Touma.

Even when Kamijou had made so many bad decisions, she still believed in him like a child.

Luckily, Kamijou wasn’t affiliated to an organization like the Anglican Church or the Roman Catholic Church. He was just an ordinary student, an outsider. So

there was no burden on him. Although he couldn't ask insiders like Index or Stiyl for help, he could do what they couldn't.

If he had a slight concern, it would be that he would be considered a citizen of Academy City, a member of the science side. However, if the situation wasn't good, it was likely that Academy City would settle it quickly by expelling him in order to disassociate themselves from him.

It was alright even if they expelled him, Kamijou thought.

Either way, Kamijou still insisted on what he believed in.

Thinking about it, he laughed.

There was no reason for him to fight, but he was running in the night.

There was really no compelling reason for him to interfere at all costs.

But he wanted to.

Part 4

Right now, the Church of Orsola couldn't be called a church. It was about the size of four to five school gymnasiums. If it was completed, it would likely be the first real cathedral in Japan. Building such a thing near Academy City, it was likely that they were trying to suppress the science side. However, as it was only built halfway, the empty space gave people a sense of loneliness.

The outer wall had just been built, and there were many steel pedals and ladders. It seemed that they hadn't started work on the interior, like it had been ravaged by greedy soldiers. There was a large black hole in the window that was to be covered with colored mosaic glass, and the place where they were planning to put a huge pipe organ was still rather unnatural. The marble floors and walls continued to shine like they were still new, but the huge Cross that was to be hung on the wall was leaning on the wall behind the podium.

However, just these alone weren’t going to create this bizarre sight.

There were no artificial lights in the hall- just starlight that was shining through the huge black window. Several hundred nuns wearing black robes were standing silently in this dark corner. They were gathered in a circle. Some were wielding objects that could be easily seen as weapons, such as swords and lances. Others were wielding religious ritual tools like gears and hooks. Every single item was reflecting light, and besides the nuns, there was no one else. The Amakusa members that had been captured were put in another building in the same construction site, and there were more than ten members guarding them.

The nuns weren’t looking outside the building.

Their eyes were fixated on the center of the circle.

There was the sound of beating.

And the groan of pain as the person gritted her teeth and endured.

“Really, we wasted so much effort. Everyone’s rather busy, including me, and we don’t have time to play games with you. If you understand, then behave yourself and accept your punishment… Hey, you listening!? ARE YOU LISTENING!? Damn it!”

Dong! It sounded like a heavy bag being kicked.

At the same time, a cry that seemed to come from hell echoed throughout the darkness.

“Humph! What's this cry about? You completely forgot about the image of a lady, and you don’t feel ashamed? Damn it, we might as well change the name of the church. We’ll be the laughingstock for coming up with a derogatory name like this.”

Orsola Aquinas didn't reply.

She had been beaten really badly, and was lying on the ground. Her clothes were torn, the zippers were broken, and the cloth was flipped over, like she had been dragged on the ground by a horse.

Agnese and company weren’t using any special magic to torture Orsola; they were just taking turns kicking her arms, legs, or stomach. But repeating such an action for a long time would bring tremendous pain. It was a violent act involving more than 200 people, and although they were somewhat lenient, they were hurting her to the point of near-death. Orsola was lying on the floor, unable to move.

Agnese brutally kicked Orsola’s legs. This terrifying power traveled through the thick soles, pressing on Orsola’s already immobile legs.

“Ugh…!”

“I don’t understand how you feel about running away. Think about your fate- actually, dying here is much better for you. Have you seen the religious trials hosted by the Cardinals? Hahaha, although they’re rather serious, the process is indeed appalling. But for something like this, we really can’t match up to the Anglicans. Compared to their trials, ours is like a game; this is the conclusion I came to upon seeing both types of trials. Ha… haha! Those old geezers, being so old, still love to play these games. And your fate is to be toyed with to death by those geezers; doesn’t that sound wonderful?”

“…!?”

Maybe it was because of the pain caused by the kicks to her legs that Orsola couldn’t say anything. Were she to open her mouth, she might even bite her tongue.

How did it end up like this? Orsola continued to think.

To anybody, the original copy of the grimoire, The Book of the Law, was something that was evil and had to be removed. Everyone wanted to destroy it, and everyone who got it would be annihilated- truly a "fallen grimoire". But humanity had no way to destroy it, and could only seal and guard it.

Orsola Aquinas only wanted to solve this issue.

Her objective was the same as the Roman Catholics': to destroy the notorious Book of the Law.

Why did it become like this?

For this to go completely differently from what she had expected, where did it go wrong?

Up until the final moment, she thought that she was saved.

Why did that boy hand her over to Agnese?

“Really, the number of friends that you can rely on is truly few. To think you’d ask the Amakusa for help when you reached Japan.”

Agnese stared down on Orsola as she spoke.

She continued to kick Orsola’s calves, looking intoxicated, like she had been mesmerized by some magic. Orsola felt that every single nerve within her was being torn as the pain reverberated through her bones.

“Being so desperate that you’ll ask those foreign Eastern people from a small filthy country? Haha… hahaha! This is really stupid; those pigs don’t even know how to read the Bible, so how much can you expect from them? According to our law, once someone marries a non-Roman Catholic, they’re guilty of bestiality; you should be clear about that. Don’t tell me that you think that everyone’s like you because they’re Christians? What Amakusa? What Anglicans? Those people don’t have the right to talk about Christ! They aren’t humans, they’re pigs! They’re mules! Of course this will happen when you hand your life over to them. Tricking an animal is so easy! Just appease them, and they’ll automatically turn their prey over!”

“…Tri… ck?”

Orsola, who was losing consciousness due to the pain, woke up upon hearing this.

“You said that… those people… were tricked?”

Her cracked lips were filled with blood, making it difficult for her to speak.

But Orsola tried hard to ask the question.

“They… didn’t help you willingly… but… were tricked?”

“Isn’t that unimportant? Anyway, you’re caught by us now! Hoho, hahaha! Oh, yeah, I remember. They even said something like ‘we’ll save Orsola from those Amakusa bastards’; really interesting, right? That's stupid! The people who are supposed to protect you have handed you over to the enemy; what a bunch of idiots!”

“…”

“I see.”

The tension of Orsola’s face lessened.

They hadn’t betrayed Orsola to the Roman Catholics. Those smiles and words hadn’t been a pretense. They had really been concerned about Orsola’s safety, and had done something so dangerous to save her.

Even if it had ended in failure.

Even if their hard work didn’t pay off and made Orsola so worse off that she was about to die.

Up until the end, they were standing on the side of Orsola Aquinas. They never gave up or betrayed her. They continued to work hard until the end. They were Orsola’s warmest and most trusted friends.

“What are you laughing at?”

“Really…? I’m… laughing?”

Orsola slowly and gently said,

“I finally know… what kind of people… we Roman Catholics are.”

“Ah?”

“Their actions… are based on trust… because they trust in others, their ideals, their feelings… They’re always willing to give their best… Compared to them… we’re truly ugly. Our actions… can only be built on lies… In order to kill me, they’re lying to the public by using a show trial… and they even lie to themselves, thinking that that’s what God wants…”

“__”

“However… I have no right to… criticize you people. If I had trusted the Amakusa right from the start… the situation wouldn’t have turned out like this. If I had followed the Amakusa’s plan… they wouldn’t have to meet so much danger. In the end… our principles… are based on the Roman Catholic Church’s nature.”

Orsola laughed.

Her devastated face revealed an expression full of sadness.

“…I can no longer run away from you people. According to your plan… I’ll be sentenced for a false crime… and buried in darkness… but I don’t care… I can’t lie to myself any longer… and can’t even lie to those friends of mine who never asked for anything in return… I don’t want to… be seen as one of you.”

“Just like what a martyr would say. You think you’re a Saint or something?”

Dong! Agnese’s thick sandals pressed viciously on Orsola’s legs. Orsola still remained calm, as if Agnese was only stepping on an empty can.

“Since you want to die so badly, I’ll grant your request. Our work will be so much easier now that you’ve given up. You just need to blame the fools who harmed you, and carry that sense of remorse and hatred to your grave!”

Agnese said it like this, but she was actually looking down on Orsola, who was still resisting. There were 200 nuns beside her ready for action anytime, and there was a strong boundary around the church, so Orsola was unable to escape either way.

Although Orsola and Agnese were within close proximity, Orsola could only hear Agnese’s words vaguely as she was still groggy. She thought using her brain that was about to shut down, and said,

“Who… should I really hate?”

“What…?”

“They never… had a reason to jump into the battlefield from the very beginning.

It’s said that one teenager among them… doesn’t belong to the Roman Catholic Church… or the Anglican Church… a really ordinary boy. They don’t have power… or reason… but they did so much… for an acquaintance like me. Is there a greater gift than this… in this world? As for those friends who gave me this gift… what can I hate them for?”

That was right, she shouldn’t hate.

Definitely not hate them.

They didn’t manage to successfully save Orsola, but they shouldn’t be blamed; they were not entitled to save her. They were not acting under a strong sense of "duty". They really wanted to save Orsola deep inside, so they used their "authority" to take part in a battle they shouldn’t be taking part in.

Just them coming forward without hesitation was something one should be grateful for.

So, Orsola didn't resent them.

Seeing such a group of people that was willing to help a stranger was a wonderful thing. Orsola felt proud. Knowing such people at the end was such a wonderful thing, and Orsola was thankful for God’s grace deep inside.

So satisfying.

So enriching.

The happiness up until now made Orsola Aquinas feel that nothing could be added on.

Unexpectedly, though, her fortune didn’t end here.

Because the next instant…

Bam! Together with something breaking, the boundary covering the church vanished.

Agnese could not help but look away from Orsola.

Something extraordinary forced her to.

“It’s destroyed…? Impossible! Quick! Someone go check the St. Giles’ talisman on the gate, and check for enemies nearby! Damn, which group is doing this? That barrier can’t be broken by one person alone. We don’t know where the enemy’s army will be attacking from…!”

Agnese quickly gave the orders.

But before the orders could be carried out, she got the answer she wanted.

“Ah…”

Orsola Aquinas saw it.

The twin oak doors of the Cathedral’s main entrance were flung open by something powerful. A person was standing at the door. This scene was like a crude fairy tale, where the prince steps up to save the princess.

But there was only an ordinary boy standing there.

Although he was just an ordinary teenager, he was not running or hiding.

For who?

For what?

The 200+ nuns standing around Orsola turned their eyes to stare at the boy. There were so many nuns, it was scary, and they weren’t ordinary people. Of course the boy was scared. He was just an ordinary teenager; how could he not be scared?

But…

The boy never backed away, as he stepped forward.

In order to save Orsola Aquinas, he stepped into the dark church hall.

This step signified that…

Don’t worry, everything is going to be alright.

Part 5

Kamijou Touma stepped into the empty church.

He saw a terrifying thing.

On a summer night, several hundred people were gathered in this building without air conditioning. Although the place was big, it was a closed room, and warm air permeated everywhere. A strong stench of sweat spread from a dark corner deep inside, like he was stepping into the lair of a large beast.

Several nuns dressed in black robes were crowding in the darkness.

In the middle of the crowd, there was a girl lying on the ground. Kamijou saw this, and silently squinted his eyes.

At this moment, Kamijou heard a laugh, as if it was laughing at his feelings.

Turning around, it was Agnese Sanctis. Her image was completely different from before.

“I’ve been finding this weird.”

Agnese giggled,

“How can an amateur who’s not even a magician be recruited for help? Seems like… although I don’t know how you do it, the ‘power’ you have can break any boundary. Am I right?”

“…”

“Aiya, what’s wrong? Did you forget something? Or are you looking for payment? Or… if you’re unwilling to leave that woman on the floor behind, you can strip her; I don’t mind.”

Agnese sounded very excited, as if she was drunk, looking carried away.

“Let me ask you something: you’re not bothering to pretend now?”

“Pretend? Pretend what? Don’t you understand the situation? Can’t you tell which side has the advantage? Don’t tell me that you think our positions are the same? What will you do in front of so many people? I feel like hearing what you want to say.”

That was true, one versus 200 was too much of a difference. Kamijou couldn’t win if he went up against so many people. Or maybe it was because Agnese understood this so well that she smugly walked towards Kamijou. Not only did she not care about her defense, she was even taunting him.

Agnese believed that Kamijou wouldn’t do anything to her. Once he did, he would start a battle where there was no chance of victory for him.

“Fool, what a fool. Seems like the Anglicans are smart enough to run away. What’s wrong with you? Hm, even so. What can one person do? If you want to run, do so now. This is your last chance. You should know what to do.”

Hearing Agnese say this with such confidence, Kamijou weakly smiled.

“My last chance… I should know what to do…”

His voice contained a strong, strange sense of calm.

“Yeah, this is my last chance. I understand.”

BAM! Kamijou Touma’s right fist cut through the air.

Agnese quickly crossed her arms to protect her head. At this moment, her feet left the floor.

Agnese, who had blocked the attack, flew backwards. She then glared at Kamijou like a fierce dog.

Without a second to delay.

Without hesitation, the boy let the enemy in front of him see his realizations.

“You… bastard, you dare to do this to me—?!”

Agnese roared.

But Kamijou Touma was louder than her.

“What should I do? WHAT NONSENSE; OF COURSE I SHOULD SAVE HER!”

The two of them were rather emotional, almost at a breaking point.

In a nutshell, it was "anger", but the reasons and auras were completely different.

The muscles on Agnese’s face vibrated irregularly as she muttered.

The nuns in black robes, who had originally been standing around, all turned and face Kamijou Touma, brandishing the many different weapons in their hands. They marched forward like an army, giving off a cold and scary sound all at once.

“You’re really… interesting.”

Agnese’s voice and body trembled.

“Facing 200 people, what can you do in this condition? Let me witness it! Haha! With the vast difference in numbers, we’ll beat you to dust in sixty seconds!”

After Agnese said this, the black nuns raised their weapons.

Kamijou Touma, who was alone, had no help, and was weaponless, clenched his fists.

Just when the battle was about to start…

A voice suddenly appeared.

“Really, we finally slipped past the hole in the barrier with great difficulty, and you blast it apart. At least give me some time to set up the rune cards, okay?”

“What…?”

Agnese was stunned. She turned around. Bam! As the sound of flames absorbing oxygen echoed throughout, the church wrapped in darkness was blown apart by an explosion and orange lights.

The light came from inside the church, just opposite Kamijou.

On the wall behind the podium, near the second level, there was a large hole that was to be covered with stained glass. An Anglican priest was standing at the window, wielding a flame sword. Seemed like he had climbed the construction platforms next to the outside wall to get there.

“…Stiyl?”

The cigarette-smoking priest stunned Kamijou, as he inadvertently called out his name.

“The original plan was to chase the outsider home and let the magicians handle this. A shame I had to say so many lies, and now everything’s wasted.”

Before Kamijou could speak, Agnese said,

“English… Anglicans? Damn it… this is an internal affair of the Roman Catholic Church! Don’t you understand that you’ll be interfering with internal politics if you step in?”

“Too bad; that argument is invalid.”

Stiyl coldly puffed out some white smoke, and said,

“Look at Orsola Aquinas’s chest; there’s an Anglican cross on her neck. The outsider over there hung it on her.”

Stiyl revealed a cynical smile.

“Once someone puts an Anglican cross on another, it means that the person wearing it will be protected by the Anglican Church; this means that she’s been baptised and is now one of us. That cross was prepared by our Archbishop, and I was supposed to hang it on Orsola’s neck… but as that order wasn’t that important, I delayed this and handed the Cross to that man. I thought that when that outsider was to be captured by you guys, you’d see the Cross, think that he was ‘a member of the large Anglican Church’, and show mercy to him… however, due to some accidental and strange circumstances, the cross is on Orsola’s neck. Right now, Orsola Aquinas does not belong to the Roman Catholic Church, but to the Anglican Church.”

“So that’s how it is…”

Kamijou vividly remembered how happy Orsola had been the moment he casually said that he was giving the cross to her. So there was such a meaning behind it.

Agnese was flushed red now, and was flabbergasted for a while before she said,

“You… you guys think that you’re able to stand firmly with such a ridiculous argument?”

“It’s really a weak base to rely on, since it wasn't done in an Anglican church, it wasn't done by an Anglican priest, and she wasn't baptized according to Anglican regulations.”

Stiyl shook the cigarette in his mouth, and said,

“But at least Orsola’s identity right now is rather delicate. She’s a Roman Catholic who still accepted the Anglican cross, and the person who gave her this cross is someone from Academy City of the science side. As for which organisation she belongs to, I believe it’s necessary to take some time to negotiate. But if you insist on carrying out a trial on her, the Anglican Church will not sit back and watch.”

Stiyl jumped down from the window, and silently landed in front of the podium.

Next, he pointed the tip of the flame sword at Agnese, who was standing far away, saying,

“And most importantly, you dare to attack that child!”

Stiyl bared his fangs, continuing on,

“Don’t tell me that you guys think that I will ignore this? I’m not so kind!”

“Peh! Even if there’s one or two of you, what can you do-!?”

Agnese angrily said this. But she was cut off by another voice before she could finish.

“It’s not just two people.”

“!?”

This rough male voice made Agnese turn around again. Suddenly, the side wall exploded, forming a large hole. A tall man wielding a large sword walked in through the dust.

“Tatemiya…”

The tall man was wielding a white flamberge whose material was unknown. Kamijou inadvertently called out his name.

Tatemiya Saiji.

The current substitute Supreme Pontiff of the Amakusa Church, a multi-religion-based Catholic organization.

Behind him were the Amakusa members who had been imprisoned in the other buildings. There was around fifty of them, and it seemed like they had found their freedom.

“You don’t have to ask why I’m doing this, right?”

Stunned, Kamijou said,

“Didn’t you say… that the easiest time to strike is when they’re moving…?”

“I thought that you’d go home quietly the moment I said that. In order to settle everything before you do anything, I talked it out with the Anglican, and now everything’s wasted. Seems like you’re a bigger idiot than I thought. However, I don’t hate such an interesting idiot like you.”

Tatemiya Saiji said this reluctantly.

Finally, footsteps could be heard behind Kamijou, followed by a familiar girl’s voice.

“Really, Touma. Didn’t I tell you that someone will settle this, and that you don’t have to worry?”

“In… dex…?”

Kamijou sputtered. A small hand grabbed Kamijou’s shoulder, and though small, it was rather forceful.

“However, seems like we can only do this… let’s save Orsola Aquinas with our own hands, Touma.”

“Un.”

Kamijou nodded his head.

Seeing this, Agnese Sanctis gave an order angrily,

“KILL THEM ALL!”

Several hundred nuns rushed out from the darkness.

The final battle had begun.

In order to end something that shouldn’t have happened, they started the final battle.

Between the Lines 2

In the middle of the night, Kanzaki Kaori was standing on the rooftop of a certain building.

The night scenery in front of her included the Church of Orsola that was being built. The building was so much different from what someone would expect of a church: not quiet, and filled with growls and sounds of things breaking.

Although she was standing far away from the church, her sharp ears could hear everything. She heard a group of people stepping forward to save a girl.

From the start, Kanzaki had never intended to help her fellow Amakusa members or attack the Roman Catholics who the Amakusa were against. Although she snuck away after this situation happened, she never thought of using violence to settle this.

She just wanted to witness it for herself.

Even when she was gone, the Amakusa hadn’t changed.

She had wanted to witness that.

Right now, she was seeing a truth that she had always believed in.

She narrowed her eyes.

That gentle expression seemed to be reminiscing something.

It was a place where she could no longer go to.

But because of that, it was a precious place to her.

Not trying to hide, a set of footsteps could be heard as someone approached Kanzaki from behind.

“Haha! What a touching scene, Kanzaki-neechin! Very good, very good! Your former comrades didn’t kidnap Orsola for the power of The Book of the Law!”

“Tsuchimikado!”

Kanzaki hastily made a long face, and turned away. But Tsuchimikado was still grinning as he looked at Kanzaki. Seemed like Kanzaki’s feelings were written on her face.

In order to hide her embarrassment, Kanzaki coldly said,

“Is your mission over? Didn’t you say that you were going to seize this opportunity to steal the original Book of the Law?”

“That? Hm, do you think that I succeeded or failed?”

“…”

“I’m joking, don’t stare at me like that. Aren’t you also clear with what’s going on? The Amakusa never stole The Book of the Law; this is all planned by the Roman Catholic Church. In other words, the Roman Catholic Church never had the need to bring the original Book of the Law to Japan. Right now, the one in Japan is a fake while the original is still inside the Vatican.”

Tsuchimikado announced that his mission had failed, but he sounded extremely happy. Did he think that his mission's unimportant? Or was he saying a lie, and The Book of the Law was already in his hands? Which was the answer? Kanzaki didn’t know.

Tsuchimikado walked beside Kanzaki, placed his two hands on the metal handrail used to prevent people from falling, and stared at the scene which Kanzaki's looking at. After a while, he said,

“Are you satisfied now?”

“…Yes, and they even exceeded my expectations.”

Kanzaki again turned to look at the church, saying,

“As long as they’re around, even without me, the Amakusa will walk on the right path. They became stronger.”

“Un, seems like they’re in a tough battle. You’re not going to help them?”

“I have no right to stand in front of them now, and they don’t need my power now. I’m like an auxiliary wheel of a bicycle.”

Kanzaki proudly said, but there was some loneliness in her tone.

There was not even the faintest sign of perplexity or hesitation.

Although Kanzaki was saying this rather seriously, Tsuchimikado was trying really hard to hold back his laughter.

“What are you laughing at, Tsuchimikado?”

“Nee-chin, seriously, you never expected Kami-yan to be involved in this, right? The Angel Fall incident last time, and when you were retrieving Index... you owe him quite a few favors, don’t you? Right now, you got him involved in your own personal issue, and you’re thinking of how to say sorry to him after this, right?”

“No, it’s nothing like that… that scenario you thought of will never happen…”

Kanzaki sternly replied.

Tsuchimikado seemed to have remembered something, and let out a huge laugh. His laughter was extremely loud, so loud that one may worry that his voice could reach the Church of Orsola. He laughed until tears rolled out of his eyes, and after a while, said,

“Let me ask you: why are you holding bandages in your hand? Don’t tell me you intend to bandage the wounds of your unconscious comrades after the battle? And after bandaging their wounds, you’ll gently stroke their faces, give a slight smile, and stealthily leave? Ehehe! Nee-chin, you can do such an old-fashioned thing? Don’t you feel ashamed doing this with such a stern face?”

“…!?”

“Ugn? Whoa, whoa, Nee-chin, what’s wrong with you? Why that deadpan look, and your temples are still moving… wait a minute! Wait a minute! I’m unarmed! Your Shichiten Shichitou isn’t to be used for play! I don’t want to be bandaged earlier than them, WA—!”

Chapter 4: Amakusa-Style Church of Distinct Doctrines. *AMAKUSA_Style_ Remix_of_Church.*

Part 1

Seven chapels form the Church of Orsola.

Every single chapel was to be used as a place for carrying out one of the seven sacraments. No two were the same size; how big each construct had been built and how much money had been spent on it depended on how often it'd be used and how important it was.

Where Orsola and company were right now was the "Marriage Chapel", the place where marriages were held. It was the place they had spent the most money on, so the room was the biggest. The second largest room was the "Fuyou Chapel", used to carry out funerals. Although the "Holy Order Chapel" and the "Confirmation Chapel" were rather significant religiously, they couldn’t earn money from "ordinary folks" like Kamijou, so their rooms were smaller. These smaller constructs were decorated with art pieces like sculptures, drawings, and stained glass, and it seemed that they planned to open them to the public as art galleries or museums in order to earn extra money for the Church.

The website that Kamijou’s phone was connected to only displayed this information. However, it was incredulous for the Church members to have set up an introductory website. Maybe they had considered this place a tourist site, as the webpage even revealed the scheduled plans and the complete map. To Kamijou and company, it was an unexpected reward… Of course, the website was only disclosing things that "the public are allowed to see".

“Peh!”

Kamijou, carrying an injured Orsola, ran through the back door of the "Marriage Chapel". There was not even a single blade of grass, as everything was covered by the flat stone floor. When Kamijou’s two feet passed the back door, the weapon-wielding nuns started chasing after him.

Taking advantage of the battle between the Amakusa and the Roman Catholic nuns, Kamijou carried Orsola out of the "Marriage Chapel". Although he was not willing to part with Index and company, they were separated, so he had to run out first.

While running, Kamijou looked at Orsola’s face.

“Sorry I’m late. Are you alright?”

“…Don’t worry. This is a minor injury; I’m alright.”

Orsola’s clothes were tattered; the metal parts of the zippers were broken. Every jerk caused her entire body to stiffen in pain, and it was obvious that her injuries were serious.

But her face only showed fatigue, and not pain.

She looked like she was going to cry, being carried by Kamijou in his arms, as she looked at his face like a missing child finally finding their parents.

Damn it! Isn’t fighting here the simplest way?

Kamijou carried Orsola as he continued to run forward.

The "Marriage Chapel" was extremely large, but to fight so many enemies inside was suicidal. It wasn’t a case of which side was stronger; just having everyone push someone would be enough to kill him. Moreover, Kamijou was just an ordinary high school student. He could win if it was one-on-one, and he'd be in danger if it was one-on-two, but he would have to run if it was one-on-three; Kamijou’s capabilities were just like that.

However…

Running away wasn’t a sign of defeat.

“Ho…!”

Just when countless pursuers were about to grab Kamijou, several Amakusa members jumped in from the roof of the chapel. The weapons that were about to pierce Kamijou’s body were sliced in half by the Amakusa members. Then, one Amakusa member viciously kicked the frontmost nun so hard that she flew backwards.

Shua—! The footsteps were like tides, as one group of Roman Catholic nuns surrounded the Amakusa members like some giant organism.

Thanks…!

Kamijou ran off, kicking a can that a worker had thrown aside. Of course, such an attack wouldn’t hurt a Roman Catholic nun.

But seeing something fly by was bound to attract their attention.

“!?”

Just when the nuns were distracted, the Amakusa members broke through the perimeter, nodded to Kamijou to express their appreciation, and scampered off.

Kamijou didn’t have time to look back. Although the nuns were wielding heavy weapons, those weapons couldn’t match a person’s weight. The nuns again chased after Kamijou, trying to whittle down this lead.

The nun in the back was waving a torch, and a magma rock as large as a softball was shot out of it. Kamijou grabbed Orsola tightly, avoided it, and arrived at the rectangular "Holy Order Chapel" behind the "Marriage Chapel". He dashed towards the step pedals used for construction around the Chapel, and climbed up the ladder leaning against the wall to the second level. A torch-holding nun followed, and Kamijou raised his right leg to kick her down. Another nun was able to get from ground level to the second through some unknown means, and Kamijou kicked her off while she was trying to balance herself on the shaking platform, causing her to fall back down.

“—”

Several nuns were standing at ground level, staring coldly at Kamijou and

Orsola.

They were beginning to realize something.

Although it was possible to corner Kamijou when they were chasing him like this, once Kamijou could create a one-on-one situation, he could keep running.

The platform that Kamijou was standing on was made of steel pipes, so they were not only thin and long but also unstable. So, the nuns couldn't attack Kamijou from every direction. If the nuns climbed up to the long platform, they'd naturally have to line up. Not only that, but if there were too many people on the platform, it wouldn’t be able to handle the weight and would collapse. Unless they were thinking of dealing damage from both sides, they couldn’t win with numbers.

The nuns silently thought about this.

They reached a common understanding without needing to talk. At the same time, they raised their weapons.

Rods, axes, crosses, Bibles, even the giant minute hand of a giant clock: they had all sorts of weapons. These weapons were aimed at Kamijou Touma, who was above them. Red, blue, yellow, green, purple, tea, white, gold… many different colors were glowing from the fronts of these weapons.

Oh… no…!

Kamijou held Orsola, who was unaware of what was going on, and frantically ran along the metal pipes. At this moment, numerous glowing feathers of different colors attacked them. These feathers looked like rocket heads attached to quills, hitting where Kamijou and Orsola had been one at a time. The feathers damaged the outer walls and the platform severely. DONG! The platform suddenly began to shake.

In fact, the nuns weren’t aiming at Kamijou, but at the platforms below Kamijou’s feet.

They never cared about Orsola’s safety. Besides, as long as her brain and heart were still working, she was defined as "not dead".

The platform underneath Kamijou's feet was shaking like a sinking ship.

Of course, once he hit the ground, he would be surrounded by several nuns.

"WAAAAAAAAHHH!"

Kamijou meaninglessly shouted. As the platform was becoming more slanted, the path he was running on got even steeper. He desperately sprinted up the almost-vertical platform, and the platform that was originally as high as the second level was now reaching the third level, near the roof.

Kamijou held Orsola tightly, and jumped.

His feet landed on the marble roof, and at the same time, the platform built from metal pipes and parts collapsed to the ground.

Hearing the platform that he had been standing on collapse with such a loud sound, Kamijou felt chilly. He hugged Orsola and finally stopped, taking in a deep breath.

"Are… are you alright?"

Orsola was worried that she was being a burden, and looked at Kamijou as she asked uncomfortably.

"I'm alright."

Kamijou casually answered as he scrutinized Orsola's condition. Orsola had been treated badly and violently, as her robes were tattered, the zippers were spoilt, and the fabric was all messed up. It could be a rather seductive scene in an ordinary situation. But right now, Orsola was thighs were covered in blood, swollen until they were brown. Nobody was going to think of anything wild.

…Damn it.

Kamijou didn't say anything as he cursed deep inside.

No matter how big someone is, they can't face off against so many nuns! Agnese Sanctis! To think that you ordered them to beat her like a spineless chicken!

Kamijou was raging inside, and really wanted to rush into the enemy's front lines, but he was worried about Orsola’s safety. He had to find some place for her to rest, and treat her wounds no matter what. Kamijou frantically thought.

But he couldn’t stay there forever.

In order to prevent the enemy from attacking him from below, Kamijou ran from the side of the roof to the middle. As long as he was there, the enemy should probably be unable to see him.

“Then…”

Kamijou placed Orsola on the roof that was under construction, and grabbed a toolbox nearby with both hands.

Thunk!

The next moment, a loud explosion occurred from below, and three nuns quickly jumped towards the roof.

Kamijou used his full strength to push the heavy toolbox away. The box hit one of the nuns, and she lost her balance before falling down to the ground.

The remaining two nuns wordlessly landed on the roof. Both of them were holding the hour hand and the minute hand of a giant clock. The bases were wrapped in bandages, probably to prevent them from falling off.

The nuns without jumping ability rushed to the roof through the stairs inside, and Kamijou could hear many footsteps below him.

Being at a disadvantage, Kamijou didn’t dare to turn his head, and only moved his eyes, looking for a way out. At that moment, Kamijou, who was standing on the rooftop, saw a nun dressed in white robes running around inside the wide compound of the Church of Orsola.

Like Kamijou, the girl was chased by several black-robed nuns.

But Kamijou, who was overlooking from the last section of the roof, couldn’t help but break out in cold sweat. In front of the white-robed nun was another group of nuns approaching. Both sides were unaware of this, but if the white-

robed nun continued to run in the same direction, both sides would meet each other.

“INDEX!”

Kamijou couldn’t help but shout. At that moment, the two nuns wielding the clock hands rushed from both left and right.

The girl running on the ground didn't hear Kamijou.

Part 2

As the positions of the "Baptism Chapel" and the "Marriage Chapel" were relatively tilted to each other, there was a triangular atrium between them. Tatemiya Saiji continued to swing his large sword in this atrium.

Tatemiya was the last Amakusa member to retreat from the "Marriage Chapel". Just like the other Amakusa members who were fighting to create enough time for Orsola to escape, Tatemiya had been trying to create enough time for the Amakusa members to escape. Currently, the Amakusa members had escaped and were now fighting the Roman Catholics.

On the smooth marble floor, there was no length of grass, and there were stands for placing sculptures everywhere. When the Church was finished, there would probably be sculptures of angels or the religious greats known as saints. Right now, however, there were no sculptures, and they were rather empty. All the religious art pieces had been blown to dust, as if the Church had been invaded by non-believers.

Tatemiya Saiji wasn’t using the tactic of "think while I fight" like Kamijou Touma did.

Because he was able to skillfully break down the enemy’s attack rhythm. He wouldn’t attack fully or defend fully; he would keep a balance between attack and defense.

When the nuns intended to charge in, Tatemiya would step forward.

When the nuns intended to step back and readjust their attacks, Tatemiya would step back.

Tatemiya’s actions surprised the nuns greatly. The moment the nuns misjudged what the enemy was going to do, they would naturally panic, and in this situation, Tatemiya normally would attack them. Even if the nuns were to carry out defensive maneuvers, they’d be blown away if they tried to block an attack from that giant sword.

But Tatemiya wouldn’t attack back. After attacking once, he would step back. He was not attacking all-out or defending fully, but instead maintaining a balance between them. Using this "stalemate" that wasn’t supposed to happen, he built up an invisible wall.

This is terrible; I can’t continue to play with them like this…

Tatemiya, though, saw his comrades waving their swords at the enemy and jumping about from the corner of his eye.

Although Tatemiya was looking rather confident and smiling, he was very nervous deep inside. The nuns were rational enough to analyze the attacks as they fought; this was why Tatemiya’s tactic could work. When the nuns got impatient enough and decided to pull out all the stops, not caring about their comrades’ safety, Tatemiya’s tactic would fail.

Whether it was attacking or defending, as long as there was an imbalance, the psychological wall would dissolve in that instant, and Tatemiya would be swallowed by the crowd charging forward.

It was like fishing, Tatemiya thought. If he pulled the rod hard, the fish would struggle and end up breaking the fishing line and escaping. To catch a fish easily, one had to give it enough freedom- which was to allow the enemy to attack and let them think that they had a chance.

Suddenly, Tatemiya could hear loud footsteps nearby.

“A new enemy?”

Tatemiya panicked, but upon listening carefully, he noticed that the footsteps were headed towards him.

Tatemiya was standing in the atrium between the "Marriage Chapel" and the "Baptism Chapel". At that moment, he saw the Anglican nun in white robes standing at the apex of the triangle, which was the small gap closest to the two chapels.

She was being chased by the Roman Catholic nuns, only to meet up with another group of them, and was finally surrounded, unable to move. The number of people surrounding her was twice that of the enemies in front of Tatemiya.

Damn it! Don’t do something like this in front of me!

Tatemiya frantically tried to save the white-robed nun, but the nuns who were surrounding Tatemiya were working together flawlessly, creating a human wall like a great creature. To them, once they took down one, there would be more comrades who could assist them in taking him down. Since they couldn’t beat Tatemiya, they were wishing that their comrades would quickly take down the other enemies.

Tatemiya and the nuns glared at each other.

In the other corner, Index was swallowed by a large crowd, her body gradually sinking among them.

“Let me show you…”

Tatemiya adjusted his breathing and slowly raised his sword, preparing to use a killing blow.

Suddenly, a man’s voice could be heard from above.

“Stop! Don’t get near that child!”

Tatemiya looked up, and in an instant, the second-level window of the "Baptism Chapel" exploded, as a firestorm erupted from inside. Next, a Roman Catholic nun was shot out like a cannonball. When she landed, she barely tried to let the joints in her legs withstand the impact, but it seemed that she couldn’t withstand it anymore, as she collapsed again and lost consciousness.

Wielding a flame sword, Stiyl Magnus was standing at the window…

He said,

“In some situations, that child is much stronger when she fights on her own. We’ll weaken her fighting capabilities if we go near her. You probably don’t want to become like those people, huh?”

“What?”

Tatemiya was intrigued. At that moment…

BOOM! There was an explosion around Index.

Index reappeared, having been surrounded by tens, maybe more than a hundred nuns all around; in other words, a section of the perimeter was blown away. In that thick perimeter, a corner had been blown off by some unknown force, causing the perimeter to form a "C" shape. About ten nuns had experienced the impact directly, and one of them even landed at Tatemiya’s feet, several meters away. Seeing their comrade flying over their heads, the nuns fighting against Tatemiya turned to look at Index.

BOOM! Another huge invisible explosion, and several nuns were sent into the air.

“…What’s going on?”

Tatemiya looked at the nun at his feet. Her face was full of despair, and her body curled up like a baby, her arms holding her head. Although she had lost consciousness, she seemed to be having a nightmare, as she was still trembling. Not only that, the muscles on the nun’s legs were torn. That phenomenon hadn’t actually been an explosion, but the nun had jumped back. As if her survival and defensive instincts had gone haywire, she had even done the extreme by doing something that far exceeded her physical capabilities in order to get away from Index.

Stiyl jumped down from the second level, and landed beside Tatemiya.

“You’re also a Christian, and you should know that there are weaknesses or conflicting concepts in several Christian teachings. Many different Christian

sects exist in order to patch up these weaknesses and conflicting concepts, but they create their own in the process; this is a so-called religious characteristic."

"…So what?"

Tatemiya gently swung his longsword, restricting the nuns' movements.

"That child has the knowledge of the entire world. With the knowledge of 103,000 grimoires, she can make sharp criticism in the 'conflicts' that Christianity has- the **Sheol Fear**.[15] To Christians, Christianity is like a function, and the paradoxes in its teachings are like holes in a cover, so the Sheol Fear is their enemy. Upon hearing this, their personalities will completely dissolve within a short time."

Of course, this spell was useless against enemies other than Christians. As for magical authors like Aureolus, they had set up a special magical barrier to prevent their minds from being destroyed by their own original grimoires, so this spell was useless to them as well. However, there were very few people in the world who could "write an Original grimoire and not get their minds broken" like Aureolus.

"The grimoires aren't just to only use spells. Although she has no magical power, she can use the knowledge of the grimoires to attack with Spell Intercept and Sheol Fear. There's likely no one better to be the magical library than her."

While the nuns were still panicking, Stiyl and Tatemiya unleashed a flurry of attacks. Stiyl let the flame blade explode, blowing the nuns away with a flame storm, followed up by Tatemiya knocking them out swiftly and cleanly. Index continued to send the numerous nuns around her flying with her "muttering".

Tatemiya was impressed and stunned. He said,

"Come to think of it, since she's capable of such an impressive spell, why didn't she use it in the beginning? Even if it was me, I'd be devastated if I was hit by that technique."

"That spell is rather unstable and troublesome. I believe you know that it's easier to do a religious brainwashing to a group than to an individual. From the science side point of view, the Sheol Fear uses group psychology to break through their own psychological defence."

Stiyl again let the flame sword explode, suppressing the nuns. The nuns were trying to find a chance to charge forward, but their faces had been burned by the flames, so they hurried back.

“The ‘purity’ of the group’s psychology affects the effectiveness of the Sheol Fear. It’s easier to use when ‘the group’s thinking of the same thing’, and much more difficult when it’s ‘a complicated group with many different thoughts’ since that causes the ‘purity’ to drop, which makes it completely useless… In other words, when I was fighting with you, because both Kamijou Touma and I had been present, the group’s ‘purity’ dropped, so she couldn’t use the Sheol Fear. I was assigned to be her guard because of this possible scenario.”

Stiyl plainly stated,

“In other words, if you rush in now, the Sheol Fear will be ineffective.”

After saying this, the conversation stopped.

There were more footsteps now.

Looking up at the roofs of the chapels beside the atrium, they saw several nuns standing above them.

Part 3

In the darkness of the "Marriage Chapel", Agnese rested her back on the marble column.

Agnese was surrounded by several nuns who were protecting her to ensure her safety. But with each explosion and crashing sound, these nuns would be so scared that their shoulders would jerk violently and they would look around frantically. In contrast, Agnese crossed her arms in front of her chest, as she silently closed her eyes to rest. The position of those who were protecting and those who were protected seemed to have changed.

“Don’t look so panicky; that’s too unglamorous. Especially you, Sister Angelene.”

“But… but… Miss Agnese…”

Those seemingly mocking words seemed to give the nuns a sense of relief, as they looked like they had seen a savior while they were on a sinking ship. Maybe talking to them would relieve them of their tension.

“The battle has lasted for more than ten minutes… Even… even if we add Orsola in, we still far outnumber the enemy… Don’t you feel something is wrong? Ah? Listen! Where did that explosion come from? Maybe… the enemy has turned from defending to attacking…!”

“…”

“Why… why don’t we take part in the battle as well? We can spare some manpower anyway…”

“It’s meaningless.”

Agnese impatiently said.

“Then… what should we do? Orsola’s been taken away… If she runs away again…”

“She can’t run.”

Agnese interrupted Angelene.

She was so confident that she was not willing to give an explanation.

“She’ll definitely be unable to run. In this damned world, this is predicated.”

The balance was broken in an instant.

The reason came from where Index was.

From the 103,000 grimoires, she found the parts that were detrimental to a Christian’s mind which created the Sheol Fear, and was attacking the Roman Catholic nuns with it. During this situation, an accident happened. One of the

nuns, Sister Lucia, the one who had attacked Kamijou in the theme park, suddenly shouted,

“Dia puiorita di cima ad un attacco! Il nemico di Dio e ucciso comunque!! (Heavy attack! Light defense! Sacrifice yourselves! Destroy the enemy of God!!)”

In an instant, the nuns completely froze.

Their faces silently and gradually became expressionless, and like a military salute, they neatly pulled out two things from their clothes. Each of their hands was holding a rather high-class fountain pen.

…?

At that moment, Index was thinking that they were planning to use some magic to fire an attack at her.

But she was wrong.

The next instant…

Almost a hundred nuns surrounding Index inserted the pens into their ears without hesitation.

The squishy sound resembled a person squeezing grapes.

Bright red blood spurted out from their ears.

At the same time, they pulled the pens that were inserted deeply into their ears out, and then proceeded to raise their weapons.

Although their expressions were distorted due to pain, they were smiling bitterly like they had just destroyed their desires. There was something white on the blood-covered pens: their eardrums.

Index strongly felt that she was going to vomit any moment.

“Don’t tell me… it’s to block out the Sheol Fear…?”

If they were unable to hear anything, the Sheol Fear couldn't work.

Index realized this chilling fact as the nuns advanced together.

“Damn it…!”

The one who realized this first was Stiyl. He really wanted to immediately get over and save Index, but the great combination attack with Tatemiya would stop working.

Stiyl continued to let the flame sword explode, letting the firestorm block the nuns’ vision. But the heat could not reach where Index was. And by encountering the same attack so many times, the nuns became used to the flames and could find a way to attack them.

“Over here!”

Suddenly, a door of the "Fuyou Chapel" opened. Kamijou Touma stood at the door that was opened outwards. Orsola, who was injured badly, was standing behind him, using the bandaged minute hand of a large clock as a crutch. Maybe Kamijou felt that carrying Orsola around while running wasn’t the way to go that he was hiding in the "Fuyou Chapel".

In this critical moment, Index, Stiyl and Tatemiya rushed into the "Fuyou Chapel". Kamijou hastily closed the door. Right at that moment, numerous blades were stabbed into the 5-cm-thick oak door.

In a short time, the door had blocked the Roman Catholic nuns' attacks.

But a door like this could not withstand for much longer. Using the story of the Three Little Pigs as an illustration, it was like they were hiding in a straw house now.

“Seems like everyone’s okay… Orsola, can you walk?”

“You really like to worry. My injuries aren’t that serious.”

Orsola’s injuries were definitely serious; it was just that they were hidden underneath her nun's habit, so nobody could see them. Even so, she still weakly smiled at Kamijou. Although Kamijou was feeling compassionate, he couldn’t do anything. So, he barely changed the subject.

“…Okay, now what?”

Nobody could answer that question. Everyone present realized that the stalemate that was originally there was gone now.

The Amakusa members out there were surviving through their own sneak attacks and escapes, so they were already busy themselves and couldn’t possibly help now.

Pang! *Bam!* Like nails being hammered into wood, the number of holes in the wall continued to increase.

Index looked extremely pale as she said,

“They… just… stabbed their ears like that… My Sheol Fear cannot work…”

Maybe Index was still thinking about how the nuns had stabbed their ears with fountain pens that the blood seemed to have been drained from her face.

“The Spell Intercept can only work against one person at a time. It’s impossible to interfere when there are so many people chanting their spells…”

“Oh?”

Index continued to analyze her battle capabilities, and Kamijou was confused. He didn’t even know what Index had done based on what principle.

Tatemiya then said,

“Although my subordinates are hard-working, I guess it’s hard for them to reverse the situation. Humans are at their scariest when they’re willing to sacrifice themselves. No matter how good an expert fighter is, he can’t handle a group of people rushing like a flood. It’s like how an army of ants can kill any beast.”

His tone was full of reluctance, overlapping with the sounds of blades being stabbed into the door and being pulled out. Several eyeballs were peeking into the dug-out holes.

Kamijou felt chilly in his stomach.

Once the door broke open, several hundred armed nuns would rush in like a landslide. If they couldn’t come up with an answer within the next few minutes, everyone inside would be unable to survive.

But the more suggestions everyone gave, the more they sunk into despair. Although Kamijou was as panicky as an ant in a hot pot, he was at a loss on what to do.

“Eh… If… we had The Book of the Law, maybe we could find a spell to protect ourselves using my code.”

Orsola suddenly asked.

Everyone turned to look at her.

The Book of the Law.

Although it was the cause of everything, the grimoire had been long forgotten by everyone. The forbidden book written by Edward Alexander- also known as Crowley, the greatest magician in the world- contained a strong power and knowledge, said to be able to allow humans to use the "Angelic Spells". Just opening one page was said to be able to end this Christian age.

Since The Book of the Law was so dangerous, "breaking the seal of The Book of the Law" could be used as a negotiating tool.

“Too bad The Book of the Law wasn’t stolen; it was all a ploy to frame us. In other words, the real Book of the Law may not even be in Japan. They only brought a fake, and the original should still be in the Vatican; we have no-”

“It’s here!”

Kamijou and Index shouted out at the same time.

That was right, the original Book of the Law was here.

“Index, although you’re unable to decode The Book of the Law, you might have memorized it thoroughly in order to decode it, right? You do have the original text of The Book of the Law in your head, right?”

“Un, I still remember those codes that aren’t decoded yet.”

Hearing that, Stiyl’s expression changed drastically.

“No way! If you do so, she’ll memorise the correct content of The Book of the Law! That means that even more magicians will want her!”

“Are you worrying about me?”

Index, who only treated Stiyl as "somebody who had nothing to do with her", asked suspiciously. Stiyl, who treated Index as an "old friend", didn’t know how to reply, and his face was flushed red. But Stiyl smacked his mouth again, not saying anything more. Stiyl was clear that Index already knew that the magicians were chasing after her, so no reason would stop her. Besides, there was no other way out.

Stiyl thought for a while. Conflicting thoughts were inside his head like angels fighting against each other. He suddenly shouted,

“Kamijou Touma!”

“What… what now?”

“You have to be even stronger! If there’s any consequence that harms her in any way, I’ll burn your body, heart, and soul until there’s not even ash!”

Stiyl then cursed, smacked his mouth again, and turned around. Index still looked like she didn’t know what was going on, as she was somewhat bewildered by Stiyl’s anger. Tatemiya looked at Kamijou with a profound meaning, then turned to look at Stiyl. Kamijou thought, “Please don’t look at me like that.”

Puzzled, Index tilted her head, and asked,

“Anyway, can you tell me how to decode The Book of the Law?”

“Ah, yes, then, I’ll explain it to you.”

Being asked by Index, Orsola continued on.

At that moment, Kamijou felt sweat emerging from his forehead.

In the past, he had thought that it was only fantasy, yet it was about to come true. The danger that Kamijou had never ever thought of continued to appear in his mind.

Kamijou was very clear of what the "Angelic Spells" that were only rumors and speculation to the magicians were (what an irony). He had seen firsthand one of the four great angels, the Power of God, summon the magic spell "Sweep"- billions of light bombs that nearly turned half the earth to crisp.

If they used such a spell, they could turn the tide around.

But…

Should humanity meddle with such power?

Orsola seemed to have sensed Kamijou's worries, and said,

"We have no need to show them the power of The Book of the Law; we just need to tell them that we have decoded it and can use it anytime. If possible, I would like to avoid using this power as well."

Orsola seriously said.

That was right; the original reason why Orsola was studying The Book of the Law was to cause the knowledge inside the book to disappear. Right now, her actions were going against what she originally believed in. Also, even if they managed to get through this crisis, they would be harassed by magicians all over the world for having the knowledge of The Book of the Law.

She had already thought about all this. But she decided to do it.

Even if it went against her ideals, even if it was going to put her in danger, she still wished to help Kamijou and company.

Throughout history, no one had been able to find a way to decode The Book of the Law.

Even Index, who was keeping the 103,000 grimoires, couldn't decode the

banned book inside her.

“The base model is Temurah, which is the switching of the texts' locations. But there’s a special rule that’s closely related to the number of lines. First, arrange the twenty-two lines of Hebrew text into two rows, and according to the rows—”

Kamijou felt like a duck that heard some thunder rumble, but to Index, it was very important. Kamijou had never seen her so serious before.

Right now, Index was processing and decoding the grimoire that nobody had read before, forming a blueprint of the strongest weapon. On one hand, Kamijou was bewildered; on the other hand, he was wondering if he was taking part in an irreversible mistake.

“—In other words, the texts with different numbers of lines have to be changed again using another rule, so it sounds complicated. But even if the page changes, as long as the number of lines don’t change, the rule of change won’t change. Then—”

“The sentences with changes done to the positions of the words have to be rearranged according the number of pages. So then, the original content of the text can be restored. The title is ‘End of Two Eras’, and the content is written in Enochian about the Human Angelification Spells.”

Index suddenly finished what Orsola was about to say, as if she had read Orsola’s mind. Orsola was wide-eyed now.

“It’s alright; I know what’s going on.”

Orsola was surprised that Index had interrupted her while she was conveying her own way of decoding that only she should know. She asked,

“May I ask, what do you mean by 'you understand'?”

“Um…”

Index said with a heavy tone.

“This isn’t the way to decode it; it’s a fake answer that the author left behind.”

“What…?”

Orsola went numb.

Index sadly turned to look at Orsola, and said,

“I’m sorry. I came up with this answer myself as well. Besides this one, there are many more fake ones out there. The most frightening thing about The Book of the Law is that…”

Index sighed, and continued,

“There’s more than a hundred ways to decode it. And every single way of decoding it can form a text, but those are all fakes. It’s not that nobody can’t decode The Book of the Law, but that anyone can actually decode it because they are misguided.”

“This is impossible…”

Orsola hoarsely croaked.

“The wrong explanation can still create a ‘text’ that someone can read, so even when one finds a wrong way of decoding it, everyone will think that theirs is the correct way. It’s normal that you fell into the trap without noticing. Besides the title on the cover of The Book of the Law, there’s also a line of English words; do you remember?”

Index painfully conveyed this cruel truth.

“‘Desire, and it’ll be thy magic’; in other words, what one perceives to be the correct way to decode it can create several ‘wrong answers’ for The Book of the Law. The Book of the Law is such a scary book.”

Orsola Aquinas’s face showed that she had lost all hope.

This couldn’t be helped. She had gambled her life in order to interpret The Book of the Law, thinking that it would bring about happiness to everyone, and destroy this grimoire, the root of all evil.

But unexpectedly, the "way to decode" that she so treasured was unable to do

anything.

Not only was it unable to destroy the grimoire, but it also couldn’t save her friends in this critical juncture.

“Look on the bright side. If we tell them that Orsola didn’t find the way to decode it, I wonder if they’ll be magnanimous in their actions?”

Tatemiya asked.

At the same time, a huge knocking sound came from the chapel’s doors.

“I guess it’s unlikely. Since they’ve thrown away their façade, they probably won’t hold back.”

Stiyl replied.

In the desperate situation, he gave a faint smile.

It was useless.

Their only hope was gone.

Kamijou frantically tried to bring Index and Orsola out the back door, but accidentally knocked into Stiyl, who was wielding a flame sword. The rune cards, which were supposed to be the killer blow, landed on the ground without response.

BAM!

There was an impact that was much louder than the first, and the off-type doors of the "Fuyou Chapel" were knocked down. Kamijou and company only had time to say two or three sentences. A few hundred nuns were wielding all sorts of religious weapons as they rushed into the church construct that was built for funerals.

Part 4

Ten minutes later.

Only the commander of the nuns, Agnese Sanctis was inside the pitch-dark "Marriage Chapel". The ten nuns that had been assigned to guard her were about to collapse from nervousness, so Agnese had relieved them of their duties by ordering them to battle. Although it was much more dangerous on the battlefield than here, they had happily accepted the order. The fear of being unaware of the situation made it even more unbearable for them.

It's nothing big; why so nervous?

Agnese sighed upon remembering the sight of her cowardly subordinates. Right now, there were sounds of explosions and crashing outside the construct, but Agnese didn't look uncomfortable. Once someone was experienced enough, they could understand the situation just by hearing the sounds. Compared to a while ago, the enemy was in a mess and could only defend.

Eh?

Suddenly, she heard some noise that was uncoordinated with the battle.

It was a set of footsteps.

The owner of the footsteps opened the huge doors of the Church.

BAM!

Kamijou Touma was standing at the entrance, but Agnese wasn't fazed. She was not panicking; in fact, she was smiling. The same scene had happened before, but right now, Kamijou looked tired, and there were many wounds on him.

"With that difference in numbers, how did you get here?"

Agnese asked as she rested her back against the marble column. Though Kamijou was breathing hard, he was smiling.

"About this, we played some tactics."

"Tactics? Hm…"

Agnese closed one eye.

“I see, I see. You’re able to appear here so smartly by sacrificing your comrades. Naturally, nobody can get here if everyone gathers to fight against my subordinates. But is this alright?”

“…”

Agnese’s statement had a mocking tone to it, but Kamijou didn’t reply.

So now, Agnese thought that she had struck some place in Kamijou’s heart where it hurt, and smiled even more happily.

“Hoho, Orsola Aquinas had been praising you people just now. She said that your actions are based on trust, that you’ll never lie to anyone. HAHAHA! This is too funny. In the end, you still tricked your comrades, using them as a sacrifice in order to protect your life, right?”

“No.”

Amidst this mocking, Kamijou revealed a smile that was completely different from hers, one that was completely free of pretense.

“Don’t think that I’m like you, I trust them very much. There are some things they can do that I can’t. So, I’m in charge of the other thing. It’s just that simple.”

Kamijou clenched his right fist.

“If possible, I hope that they can believe in me, feel that I can complete this mission, and don’t have to worry.”

“…Do you think that by beating their commander, my subordinates will stop their attacks? I’m impressed that you guys can come up with such a naïve idea. What will happen to sheep that lost their shepherd besides going out of control?”

Agnese Sanctis’s back left the icy-cold marble pillar.

She kicked the silver staff that was left aside on the ground, and it popped up, and landed in her hands.

“Alright, I’m bored to tears anyway. Idleness is a sin; I’ll crush your last hope as a parting gift.”

Kamijou Touma looked around, confirming the situation.

The two of them were about 15 meters apart. As the construction inside the church wasn’t complete, the interior was completely empty, and there were no obstacles. A huge group of people were fighting outside, and there were only Kamijou and Agnese in this closed room.

The silver staff that Agnese was holding was fine, and there was a sculpture of an angel on it. The angel was in a pose like that of The Thinker, an art piece of Auguste Rodin (1840-1917, a famous French sculptor), but there were six wings enveloping the angel like a cage.

Dang! *Dang!* Two clear sounds could be heard.

Agnese removed the thick soles on her sandals, kicking them backwards.

“Tutto il paragone. Il quinto dei cinque elementi. Ordina la canna che mostra pace ed ordine. (In accordance with all things. The fifth of the five elements. Open the crosier that symbolizes peace and order.)”

She uttered a chant as she held the staff with two hands. The angel wings that were curled up on the silver staff opened up like flower petals. The six wings were like a figure disc of a clock, as they pointed outwards accurately in six different directions of equal angles.

“Prima. Segua la legge di Dio ed una croce, Due cose diverse sono connesse. (First idol. In accordance to the laws of the son of god and the cross, link a different object with a different person.)”

Agnese chanted on as she started to swing the silver staff gently.

DANG! The front tip of the staff hit the marble pillar, creating a loud sound.

…?

Both of them were rather far away from each other. For Agnese to strike like that, it really confused Kamijou.

Bam!

Kamijou's vision suddenly tilted 90 degrees sideways.

“GYAAA… AAA…!”

Kamijou felt that he had been hit on the side on his head by some sort of metal; the moment he was aware, he was already on the floor. He felt giddy, and looked up. Agnese again grabbed the end of the staff, spun it around twice, and slammed it on the marble floor.

Kamijou felt his back go numb, and quickly did a roll. In an instant, an invisible force hit where his head had originally been. *BAM!* With that heavy impact sound, there was a dent and some cracks on the ground, like it was hit by a hammer.

A coordinated attack? Is it an attack that’s similar to teleportation?

Kamijou understood that he couldn’t stay in the same area even though he didn’t know how the attack worked. At that moment, Agnese pulled out a knife from her arm, and scratched the side of the staff like a guitar.

Kakakaka! Behind Kamijou, who was running around frantically, an invisible force cut the air.

“That staff…!?”

“Haha, seems like you finally realized it. This is like that map magic that the Amakusa used, but it’s really a bother to explain. Once I damage this staff, other objects will be damaged as well… like this!”

Agnese pretended to raise her knife, only to swing the silver staff around before slamming it into the ground. Kamijou was unable to dodge this attack from above in time, and his left shoulder sunk downwards in an unnatural position.

Dong! At that moment, the heavy impact could be heard.

“…!”

Such an attack could be nullified by the Imagine Breaker, but the problem was "where the attack would come from", so he couldn’t raise his right hand in time.

Kamijou stopped at this point. After Agnese raised the staff and swung it around,

she slammed it into the marble pillar with her full strength.

Oh, no…!

Kamijou hastily threw himself to the side. Luckily, there was a slight delay from when Agnese gave the order to when the attack actually happened; in other words, as long as he kept moving, he shouldn't be hit.

Pow!

The strike that shouldn't have hit Kamijou cut deeply into his left wrist and the left side of his abdomen.

"GYAAAAHHHH…!"

Kamijou was pushed to the ground by the lateral impact. He felt a sharp pain coming from deep inside his abdomen, which was the center of the body. Although his left wrist was between the point of impact and the left side of his abdomen, the impact slammed it into his abdomen. The joint of the left wrist seemed to be broken, and not only was he unable to use any strength, but even his sense of pain was gone. He could only feel a burning sensation.

Agnese tapped the staff on the ground.

Kamijou quickly rolled on the floor, but the impact still struck his chest. All the air in his lungs escaped. Even so, Kamijou endured the pain as he jumped backwards, wanting to avoid the next wave of attacks.

Agnese quickly raised her knife and scratched the staff, causing a few diagonal cracks behind Kamijou.

Papapa! The muscle fibers on Kamijou's back seemed to be torn.

For some reason, like lightning and thunder, there was a second of delay between the damage and the pain.

"GYA… AA… AAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

Kamijou continued to roll on the ground, his back hurting like it had been burned by fire. Agnese swung the staff horizontally across, and Kamijou

continued to bounce on the ground like pebbles skipping on the water surface.

“Don’t think that you can dodge them so easily.”

Agnese said with a cold expression, and swung the silver staff.

“Although there’s a time lag between the command and the execution, once I calculate and readjust the position of the attack, this can be offset; in other words, all I need to do is predict where you will dodge to, and by setting up the attacks in those positions, you’ll run into the attack area. Anyway, this isn’t impressive. Those times when I missed were samples to help me correct the position errors; didn’t you realize it?”

Kamijou desperately turned his head that was hurting and hot, trying barely to hear all this. He stumbled as he endured the lingering pain on his back.

As if she was confident of victory, Agnese rubbed her staff with her cheeks, saying,

“I wonder if you know that in Modern Western Magic, there are five elements— fire, wind, water, earth, and ether— that each have their own symbols. A ‘stick’ represents fire, a ‘dagger’ represents wind, a ‘cup’ represents water, and a ‘plate’ represents earth: these are the so-called elemental weapons.”

Agnese chuckled.

“And this **Symbolic Weapon** in my hands is the **Lotus Wand** that represents ether. It has a very interesting characteristic: it can change into a weapon of the other elements.”

Shua! Agnese swung the staff diagonally downwards.

When the staff struck the ground, Kamijou felt chilly, and jumped backwards- but this was predicted by Agnese. The premeditated strike hit Kamijou’s head from right above. Kamijou’s legs became weak, and he almost knelt down. His body was swaying about, and he couldn’t maintain his balance.

Kamijou tried to swing his right arm wildly, but the impact seemed to be mocking his stupid behavior, as it hit him in the stomach from an entirely different direction. Kamijou’s vision was blurred, and his legs were trembling

badly.

Ugh… Damn it, I can remove it if I can touch it! How can I touch it? How can I predict where Agnese's attack will come from? Right now, all I can do is predict when it'll come…

Kamijou looked rather angry, while Agnese grinned happily.

"Everything is created from the five elements. By mixing this with Idol Theory, what will be the result? Didn't that magical library explain the map magic of Ino Tadataka? It's the same idea, but that magic links the 'map' with the 'landscape'. However, this five-element staff represents everything; in other words, it can cause everything to be suitable for this rule- like, say, air itself…!"

Agnese raised her staff and slammed it into the pillar like a nail. The heavy impact hit Kamijou, whose reaction was slowed by half a beat, in the stomach. His entire body fell backwards.

He struggled to stand up, and found a trail of blood flowing out from the corner of his mouth.

Kamijou spit out the blood in his mouth, and said,

"Ugh… Peh. You said that you hated The Book of the Law, that you hated magic… yet it seems that you enjoy using it—"

This meaningless conversation allowed Kamijou to catch his breath. Agnese knew this, but didn't seem to mind.

"Hahaha, I know that you're very angry after being hit so many times. But the Bishop staves that the higher clergymen use evolved from the warhammer. The warhammer was used to destroy enemies' armor, so what's wrong with me hitting the enemy? Haha, come to think of it, it's ironic that people view this metal rod as a symbol of peace and order."

Agnese stuck her tongue out, and licked the side of the staff as if she was intoxicated. A weird tinge passed through Kamijou's body, causing him to jump back frantically. Upon seeing his reaction, Agnese laughed.

"Besides…"

Agnese gently continued,

“Didn’t I say this before? The basic theories behind modern Western magic that was established in the 20th century were just some backdoor teachings of Christianity- or in the words of the alchemists, ‘these are secrets of Christianity that humans don’t know of.’”

Agnese again struck the staff down onto the ground.

Kamijou desperately tried to escape, but his feet could not catch up to his thoughts.

Dong! The heavy impact hit his head.

“Ugh…! What does that… got to do with me…? I’m not a magician.”

“All the same. Being able to get God’s grace despite not praying to him... that's unforgivable. Isn’t it? We worked so hard for the organization, so why do we have to spend money on people like you who never did anything? Those radicals, the Anglican Church, and the Amakusa are all the same. Any teachings outside the Roman Catholic Church aren’t teachings. They didn’t contribute anything; what they do end up being are obstacles. These people are like pawns who only deserve to sacrifice themselves on a mission.”

It’s coming…!

Kamijou gritted his teeth.

Agnese’s attacks may not have been as powerful as Stiyl’s flame sword or Tatemiya’s strikes, but even an ordinary person wouldn’t be able to take it after being beaten a few times. Kamijou’s legs were trembling, indicating that his body was at its limits.

The time of attack was rather precise.

Since it was a magical attack, it was possible to eliminate it with his right hand.

So…

As long as he could grasp the angle and direction of the attack…

As long as he could touch Agnese’s attack with his right hand, it would be alright.

It’s coming!

Agnese frowned as she held the staff around like a performer. Kamijou was unable to dodge this "premeditated strike". Before he could even raise his right hand, the impact sent him flying away, and he rolled on the ground. He quickly pushed himself off the ground, and got up straight.

Dong! Kamijou concentrated all his strength on his legs as he stepped forward.

The distance between the two of them was about seven meters.

With Kamijou’s pace, he would be able to get in front of Agnese in two or three steps. Agnese looked rather relaxed, though. It was much easier to predict the enemy’s movements if he continued running forward. She tightly held onto the staff, and swung it into the ground like she was hacking a watermelon.

BAM!

There was a heavy sound.

If this strike lands from above, it would definitely smash his skull to pieces.

But…

I’ve been waiting for this—

Kamijou slammed his shoes onto the ground, and suddenly stopped moving forward.

As long as he didn’t move forward, he wouldn’t be hurt by the attack that was set up in front of him.

—I've been waiting for quite a while!

Then, Kamijou clenched his right fist, and swung it towards the empty space in front of him which he was about to "step into".

BAM!

A sound that was like a blown balloon bursting was heard. Kamijou felt his right arm touch some giant invisible bubble. The attack that should have appeared there vanished into thin air, just like that.

“WHAT?!”

In contrast to this amateur, Agnese the magic specialist was more aware than anyone else that this couldn’t possibly happen.

Like a cannonball, Kamijou rushed into the empty space in front of him.

Agnese frantically raised the staff in front of her.

But being caught off-guard, she couldn’t use her full strength.

Kamijou was already in front of Agnese.

Agnese’s staff finally hit the marble pillar.

With a resounding crash, Kamijou’s head tilted to one side.

But…

He didn’t loosen his grip.

Bam!

A heavy-sounding hit.

The back of Agnese Sanctis slammed into the wall.

She became giddy.

Old fragments of her memories that were sealed away gradually started to appear in her hollowing heart.

Ah… Don’t tell me…

Agnese tried desperately to seal her memories away, but like magma rising, there

was an instinct to vomit from deep inside her stomach rising up, interfering with her thoughts.

I'm going back…

The scene in her memory was of a dark alley in Milan. All the sunlight had been robbed by tourist streets outside.

Over here, there were only people lying on the red brick ground, rodents, worms, and slugs.

Over here, there was no hope.

Am I going back there again…?

Going deeper into the memory, this fragment pierced through her heart.

It was the back door of a restaurant. She was digging into the rubbish bin for scraps of meat. She was afraid of dropping it onto the bodies of the slugs, the fur of the rodents, and the shed wings of the cockroaches, as she put it into her mouth, continuing to chew, and chew, and chew.

She did the same action every day.

No…

The cry in her heart awakened her from her haziness.

Her wrists were numb, her weapon was on the floor, and the knife that was used to scrape it slipped. Just like that, the symbol of her fighting spirit, the weapon that was used to defeat the enemy, left her hand, and fell to the ground.

But…

Even though she had already let go of the knife, she was not going to let go of the staff.

No! I definitely don't want to… go back to that kind of life…!

Agnese held onto the silver staff tightly as if she was going to snap it.

Her consciousness was back.

Her fighting spirit was back.

“!!”

Kamijou Touma and Agnese Sanctis were glaring at each other.

Both of them were now approximately five meters away from each other. Whether it was the fist with a shorter attack range or the staff with a longer one, both could hit each other in an instant. This staring contest was like an iaido contest in an old drama, or a quickdraw contest in a Western movie.

Cold sweat flowed down their faces.

Their nerves were tight.

They stopped breathing.

“Humph.”

Suddenly, Agnese dully sighed as she lowered the staff. Not only that, but she also looked away from Kamijou, and started to look around.

Although it was a perfect opportunity to attack, Kamijou remained cautious. He was trying to find a trace of possible danger in this chance.

Agnese rolled her eyes at him, and said,

“I know you’re working hard, but everything’s over.”

At that moment, Kamijou didn’t understand what she was talking about.

But after thinking about it for a while, he understood what she meant.

Right now, it was quiet inside the "Marriage Chapel"; even the dropping of a pin could be heard in this place. It was like being locked alone inside a cinema; the terrifying silence stimulated the ears, travelling down from the head to the heart.

This silence wasn’t caused just by Agnese and Kamijou not moving about.

It also included outside.

There were about 250 Roman Catholic nuns, together with the allied group of more than 50 Anglicans and Amakusa members combined.

The total should be more than 300, as they were supposed to be fighting outside the "Marriage Chapel".

But right now, not a single sound could be heard.

What did this mean?

This meant…

“…”

Kamijou felt a stinging sensation all over his skin.

As if she wanted to remove this stinging sensation forever, Agnese Sanctis continued,

“Your original plan seems to have been for you to beat me, the commander, while your comrades held up my subordinates.”

Her tone was mixed with senses of mockery, insult, and sympathy.

“But this illusion seems to have been destroyed.”

Kamijou was stunned as he heard this.

He even forgot to breathe.

He released his fist.

There was no reason to battle anymore.

There was no reason to stay there.

Kamijou could only stand around, stunned.

A particular person’s face appeared in his head.

“Yeah.”

He gathered his last ounce of confidence, and said,

“That’s right; your illusion is destroyed, Agnese Sanctis.”

“What?”

Agnese frowned.

BAM! At that moment, the Marriage Chapel’s doors behind Kamijou were forced open.

Agnese Sanctis, who was facing off against Kamijou, slowly looked over his shoulders, at the doors.

Her face was full of fear and anxiety.

The figures at the doors of the "Marriage Chapel" weren’t her subordinates, but Index and Stiyl Magnus of the Anglican Church; Tatemiya Saiji of the Amakusa Church; Orsola Aquinas, who was in Tatemiya’s hands; and Tatemiya’s comrades.

Besides them…

There was a humanoid monster covered in orange flames that was standing beside Stiyl.

Agnese didn’t know what that monster was.

But everyone who knew it called it,

"Innocentius".

A flame monster with a temperature of more than 3,000 degrees Celsius. Once created, it would continue to implode and regenerate, melting the enemy's every attack and any obstacle until its enemies were vanquished; a super offensive magic that followed the principle of "offence is the best defense" to the letter.

But even those who had seen this magic before would wonder if they were seeing an illusion at this moment.

Compared to back then, the Innocentius right now was completely different: the density of the flames and the momentum were different. The heat that was released from it distorted the air surrounding it, and there seemed to be countless invisible wings behind its giant back.

“I used 4,300 rune cards.”

The red-haired priest casually said.

“This number isn’t much… but the Amakusa are really something. They used the position of the runes to form a large picture, setting it up such that there’s a magical meaning throughout this entire place- which means that the Church of Orsola has become a giant magic circle. And they even placed this construct outside the effective area in order to prevent the boy’s right hand from destroying it… Such a multi-structured magic circle that includes and uses so many things, although it’s unorthodox, I may end up spending a lifetime studying this and still be unable to finish learning it.”

Stiyl proudly looked at the lump of fire in front of him.

“Thanks to them, the rune cards had been set up. Come to think of it, almost everything had been set up before the battle, and we were just touching it up just now, like filling up the missing parts of a jigsaw puzzle. Oh, yeah, I haven’t introduced myself. I’m never the type that will run around as they fight; I prefer to stand at one point and wait. Because of this reason, I need this kind of magic.”

The doors of the church were opened, and one could see the scenery outside. On the flat stone atrium, where there was not even a single blade of grass, burn marks from the magical flames were everywhere. The nuns in black robes were lying all over the place. Their flesh wasn’t burnt to ash, nor were they seriously burned.

The explosions that they had just heard had likely came from this flame monster.

The shockwaves caused by the flames pushing the air away had sent the nuns sprawling on the floor.

These nuns that couldn’t get up were just comatose.

Though only a fifth of the nuns had lost their combat capabilities, the destructive

capabilities of Innocentius scared the rest, causing them to grit their teeth, not daring to rush forward.

Because they knew that once they got near carelessly, they would be the next victim of the flames and heat.

“I told you just now that we played a few tactics.”

Kamijou viciously smiled,

“They weren’t running all over the place just to be bait; they were just setting up the cards for Stiyl’s secret weapon… Of course, not being a magician, I’m not sure of the details.”

Kamijou’s right hand had the ability "Imagine Breaker"; he was unable to take part in the setting up of the rune cards, so he was the only one responsible for taking down Agnese. All this was a ploy to ensure that Agnese would be misled into thinking that Kamijou had used the rest as bait in order to create a chance for a duel to the death with her, so that the rune cards wouldn’t be destroyed.

Although Kamijou didn’t explain, Agnese had almost guessed what was going on.

At the same time, she knew what she needed to do.

She carefully raised her staff, and shouted at the nuns outside the "Marriage Chapel",

“WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? WE HAVE MANY MORE PEOPLE THAN THEM! THESE PEOPLE AREN’T WORTH FEARING AS LONG AS WE FINISH THEM ALL OFF!”

That was right. No matter what anyone said, there was a huge difference in the number of people between the Roman Catholics and Kamijou's group. The reason that Kamijou and company were still alive was due to their tactics and running about. The Roman Catholics could beat them easily as long as they surrounded them, not giving them a chance to escape, and attack at the same time. Although there'd be several casualties, the remaining 100+ people would step over their comrades’ dead bodies to finish off Kamijou and company.

This was the reason that Stiyl, though a professional magician, hadn’t killed a single nun; once he killed a few of them, the others would go berserk and commit a kamikaze attack, causing the situation to become even more dangerous. With his magical prowess, killing people was a lot easier for him than not killing them.

However…

The nuns, who had a huge advantage in numbers, didn’t take action.

“What are you doing…!?”

Agnese saw that her subordinates were unable to understand this simple logic, and was about to scold them.

But at that moment, she realized the reason behind it:

Doubt.

Although the nuns understood that Agnese’s point was correct, their hearts were unable to completely believe. Their hearts were like an unstable balance, unable to decide whether to fight or run. As long as one of them took action, the group psychology would affect the entire situation.

Agnese Sanctis remembered what Orsola Aquinas had said.

“Their actions… are based on trust…”

“…Compared to them… we’re truly ugly.”

Agnese lowered her head, and gritted her teeth, almost breaking her molars.

Since the balance was in a swinging state, the problem could be solved by breaking this balance through tough measures; in other words, all Agnese needed to do was beat Kamijou in front of her.

If she used the power of the other nuns, she wouldn’t be able to show her superiority. However, Kamijou was in the same predicament; if his comrades were to beat Agnese, it would reveal his anxiety, nervousness, and fear. At that moment, the doubts inside the nuns’ hearts would disappear, and they'd rush

onwards with the momentum of an avalanche.

In other words, it could only be settled with a one-on-one fight.

Kamijou Touma versus Agnese Sanctis.

Though the number of people on both sides totaled to more than 300, the two of them were in a state of isolation and helplessness.

The distance between them was now about five meters.

This distance was still within the staff's striking range, but Kamijou just needed to step forward in order to say hello to Agnese’s body with his fist. The situation for both sides was rather comparable; in other words, whoever struck first would win.

What… what should I do…?

Agnese carefully maintained the distance between them as sweat flowed down her forehead.

Will my attack hit him first?

Agnese kept telling herself to not panic. The usefulness of the Lotus Wand couldn’t be compared to a mere fist. As long as she estimated the position and struck with full force, beating the ordinary man in front of her should be easy.

What… what… is the right thing to do…?

However, should she really gamble everything on just a simple hit? What would happen if he dodged it? What if she guessed wrongly? Should she first use several light and fast attacks to limit his movements just to be safe before striking him down in one hit? The problem was that if those light attacks couldn't block his attack, and he rushed forward, what would happen to her?

But, but then, however, rather, the problem is, come to think of it…

Agnese overturned her thoughts again and again.

There were too many tactics that she could use, but she didn’t know which one

to choose.

Method time, weapon… distance… How should I attack?

In contrast…

Kamijou Touma had no doubts over his tactics.

He concentrated all his strength into his right fist.

He would bet his life on this hit.

He believed.

Even though he was tired and one leg was in the coffin, he believed.

He believed in his weapon, in the path that his weapon created, in the scene when his weapon brutally hit the enemy's body, that his victory would bring about a wonderful future.

Kamijou Touma's actions were based on trust.

"It's over, Agnese."

There was no hesitation in Kamijou's voice.

"You should be clear about it yourself; your illusion is already destroyed."

Stiyl pinched the cigarette in his mouth, and threw it to the ground.

The two saw the orange flame fall onto the ground from the corners of their eyes.

At that moment, the battle started.

DONG! A strong and powerful step was heard.

Kamijou Touma clenched his iron-like fist, and swung it at Agnese.

What should I do… what should I do—
KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

Something seemed to break inside Agnese Sanctis's heart.

Though the enemy's attack was in front of her, the swaying balance was unable to make a decision. Agnese, whose mind hadn't made a decision yet, was forced to make one. With low confidence, she swung the silver staff.

One side had already bet everything on his right fist; the other side didn't know what to do.

It was obvious which side had the advantage.

BAM!

A stunning impact sound.

Agnese's body flew away, grazed the large marble pillar, and viciously landed on the ground.

The large impact forced the staff to fall out of Agnese's hands. After rolling on the ground for several meters, when all the air in her lungs seemed to have escaped, she finally stopped rolling.

By that time, she had already lost consciousness.

With this, the power balance between Index, Stiyl, and company and the Roman Catholic nuns surrounding them was dissolved in an instant. A nun who lost all hope of winning dropped her weapon, creating a sound. A second one… A third one… Finally, all the weapons dropped to the floor like a downpour.

The battle was over.

Just the fist of a single boy was able to bring down the inner mental defense of more than 200 enemies.

Epilogue: End Action. *The_Page_is_Shut.*

Kamijou's injuries seemed to have been more serious than he had thought.

He could only piece together what had happened afterward with his fragmented memories.

He had fainted in the "Marriage Chapel"… Index had run over, screaming… He had been sent on an ambulance… The administrative issues had taken quite some time before he had been sent for emergency treatment… He still had been sent back to Academy City in the end… The frog-faced doctor had appeared before him… The moment he was awake, he was on the soft bed.

…This hospital room again. Ugh, this is terrible; to think that I can even tell by the scent…

Kamijou kept his eyes shut as he thought about this before he suddenly sensed someone beside him. He could hear a gentle sigh and the sound of clothes gently rubbing together. A warm and soft hand was stroking his bangs.

"Although I'll be laughed at by Tsuchimikado…"

A voice rang.

"…I really want to do this."

There was some sense of reluctance in the tone. The hand that was stroking his bangs was gone, and so was its warmth.

Kamijou opened his heavy eyelids.

"Hm… Kanzaki?"

"Ah… you're awake? I was intending to leave."

Kamijou’s voice seemed to stun Kanzaki, as her upper body bent slightly back. She was sitting on the metal chair reserved for visitors, and it looked like she had been staring at Kamijou closely.

Kamijou sat up on the bed and shook his head, trying to keep himself awake.

It seemed to be early morning now. The lights in the room weren’t turned on, so it was a bit dark. The morning sun shone in through the window like it was shining through the gaps between the leaves of a tree. On the short table beside him, there was a box of seemingly high-class snacks and a sheet of tissue paper. Kamijou continued to look around.

Kanzaki had already stood up from the metal chair. It seemed like she didn’t intend to stay any longer.

“…Ah…”

Kamijou’s dizzy mind started to work. Looking closer at Kanzaki, her attire was still the same. A short T-shirt with a knot tied at the bottom, revealing her navel; and a pair of jeans below with one side sawed off, revealing her thigh. Because the T-shirt was tied down, her breasts were much more noticeable. One could see her snow-white leg, from the thigh all the way down. Although Kamijou felt that this getup was hot, he didn’t dare to say it, for he would get a punch the moment he said this. He quickly looked away, saw the note on the table, and read from it,

“Since you’re still not awake, I’ll just leave a message…”

Before he could even finish the first sentence, Kanzaki snatched the note off the table with astonishing speed. It would be an unbelievable new record if it were a competition. Kanzaki's face flushed red, as she gazed around, sweating all over, and quickly crushed the small note.

“It’s… it’s nothing important! Since we have the chance to talk to each other, there’s no need for this note!”

“Eh? But…”

“No buts! Saying the contents of a note to the writer who’s leaving is very embarrassing.”

Kanzaki wanted to throw the note, now crushed into a ball, into the dustbin. She thought about it, and decided to keep it in her pocket. Kamijou was curious, wondering what she wrote that could not be seen. Kanzaki placed a hand on her ample chest, took a deep breath, and regained her original expression.

“Is your… body fine?”

“How do I say this…? The numbness isn’t completely gone, and I’m not exactly sure where I’m hurting.”

“I’m sorry. Although the Amakusa have spells that restore a person’s health through eating, they'd be useless on you.”

“Why do you have to say sorry? Now that you mentioned it, eating things like sushi and burgers can heal wounds? The Amakusa are really amazing; isn’t that an old element of RPGs?”

“Um…?”

Kanzaki was puzzled as she barely gave a perfunctory answer.

“Oh, yeah, where’s Stiyl?”

“He already left Academy City. He doesn’t want to stay in a city where he can’t buy cigarettes. He grumbled to me a long time ago that Academy City is very strict regarding the age when it comes to buying cigarettes.”

Kamijou muttered deep inside. That was how it should be.

“Can’t you buy them for him?”

“I’m only eighteen years old; I can’t buy them for him.”

…

“Why a look of disbelief? What are you trying to say by digging your ear?”

“Liar! You faked your age, right? No matter how I see it, you’re already past the age for marriage- WAAAAAA!”

Before Kamijou could finish speaking, Kanzaki’s supersonic metallic punch brushed past his face. Being unable to react at all, Kamijou was scared, but Kanzaki’s expression wasn’t any different from how she normally looked.

“I’m eighteen years old.”

“Eighteen?! You’re a high school student who can finally do those things! Kanzaki-senpai!”

Kamijou, whose teeth were still chattering, barely squeezed a smile out. Kanzaki sighed, and retracted her fist. She seemed rather tired.

“…Seems like I should have left after writing that message. We’ll never get straight to the point if we continue on like this.”

“The point?”

“Yes- or should I call it the closing report… I want to tell you Orsola Aquinas’s current condition. Would you like to hear?”

“Yes! I’m very interested!”

Kamijou pulled his upper body over, answering without any hesitation. Seemed like Kanzaki sighed when she saw him being so panicky.

“Orsola Aquinas and the Amakusa were accepted as members of the Anglican Church; this is how the situation ended. The benefit of this is that they’ll be protected from any revenge or assassination plot by the Roman Catholic Church.”

Kamijou thought about Agnese and the other nuns.

“In other words, Orsola is still in danger, right?”

“No, the Roman Catholic Church might look like they’re not going to quit, but deep down, they’re not interested in her anymore because the Anglican Church has declared to the world that Orsola found ‘the wrong way to decode the book’. Once everyone finds out that her way of decoding is wrong, nobody will bother her about The Book of the Law.”

In other words, if Orsola had really found the correct way to decode The Book of the Law, she wouldn’t be able to live a peaceful life. Maybe it was a blessing in disguise. Thinking about this, Kamijou broke out in cold sweat.

“Hm. However, you said that the Amakusa have become members of the Anglican Church?”

“Yes. Although the main base of the Amakusa is still rather secretive, there’s no benefit to opposing the Roman Catholic Church anyway. Really, it’s like they were hoping for this development. For example… do you remember that white T-shirt that Tatemiya Saiji wore? There's a slanted red cross on it.”

“…Is there? Now that you mentioned it, there did seem to be one.”

“That’s right. That red cross is the logo of St. George, the symbol of the Anglican Church. Wearing that shirt to battle, it means that he wants to join the Anglican Church together with me. I ordered them that time to not follow me around.”

“That’s right… Besides, you’re an Anglican.”

Kamijou lamented. Kanzaki muttered, “Really.” She looked like a mother who was seeing her child being unable to stand up on his own; it was just that she never sensed it herself.

“However, are you alright with this? Even though the Amakusa are small, they’re still a religious sect. Now that they’ve been taken in by the Anglican Church, isn’t it like a small company being absorbed by a large one?”

“Although the Amakusa were absorbed by the Anglican Church, they don’t have to abandon their codes and teachings. Like a feudal lord allowing a general to keep a faction, the ‘Amakusa Church’ can still exist. Also, the Amakusa is a multi-religious group that can hide within history itself and change according to the age. They’re never picky on the rituals; as long as they can make their lives

more convenient, they can work under any condition.”

Come to think of it, Kanzaki originally had given up her position as the leader of this small sect in order to protect them. Thinking about it, she was really an amazing person. Even though she said that she was eighteen, to Kamijou, an eighteen-year-old was an adult.

Just when Kamijou was casually thinking about this, Kanzaki suddenly gave a proper bow to him.

It was not a simple nod, but a deep bow. She said,

“Erm… That… what happened this time… I’m really sorry.”

“Ah? Eh? What? Why are you bowing to me? What are you really sorry about?”

At this moment, Kamijou had just woken up, so his mind was rather hazy. He felt that it was really frightening for "a female to bow to him", like he had done something extremely evil.

Kanzaki stammered, a rare sight,

“It’s… that… what happened this time… due to some personal matters… I caused you some trouble…”

Seemed like Kanzaki was unused to saying something like this, as she looked like she didn’t know what to do. Kamijou, who was still in a daze, didn’t understand what was going on at all; all he knew was that Kanzaki seemed troubled, so he said,

“Ah, sorry, Kanzaki. Did I do something that bothered you? If that's it, let me apologize to you for that.”

“No, no, it’s not that. I’ll feel even more ashamed if you apologize to me. Eh, it’s not that, back to the original topic; anyway, it’s…”

Kanzaki looked like she couldn’t open her mouth, as her fingers continued to play with her bangs. She stuttered, unable to say anything.

After a while, Kanzaki finally made her decision, and was about to open her

mouth. At that moment, the door of the hospital room was rudely opened.

This tall guy, who went into a hospital room early in the morning without knocking on the door, was wearing a Hawaiian shirt and a pair of blue shades.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

He was holding a plastic bag, swinging it around. There seemed to be gifts for hospital visits inside it.

“Hoho—hehehe—! Kami-yan, I’ve come to play with you! One entire honey dew is too expensive, so I bought those luxury puddings in the convenience stores with a honey dew topping on them! Just settle with this, won’t ya?”

Kamijou looked away from Kanzaki to Tsuchimikado.

“Hai! It’s time for school in a few hours; don’t you plan to sleep? Ah, sorry, Kanzaki. What were you trying to say?”

“Ugh…”

Being asked by Kamijou like this, Kanzaki seemed terrified. She stared at Tsuchimikado from the corner of her eye, giving off a signal saying, “Do I have to say it in front of this guy? Why is this guy so inopportune in coming here?”

Tsuchimikado, who was acutely sensitive, immediately sensed that the atmosphere wasn’t right, and said,

“Whoa, whoa! Nee-chin, you’re finally planning to say thanks to Kami-yan? Let me guess: it’s a very cliché line, isn’t it? If it’s not ‘It’s hard to forget your grace even if my teeth are gone,’ it’s going to be ‘I won’t forget this even through death,’ right? Eh, eh!? Hahahaha! You think you’re the crane that showed gratitude in a fairy tale?”

“No… no way! Who'd say that sort of thing to this immature brat that lacks common knowledge!?”

“…Lacks common knowledge… immature brat…”

Upon hearing that, Kamijou was hit really hard, and lowered his head.

Kanzaki was shocked, and quickly corrected herself,

“Ah, no! I don’t mean it, that… that statement was to make Tsuchimikado retract his ridiculous comments… but as for that thanks-giving… erm…”

“Why bother saying so much? Besides, won’t Nee-chin strip herself naked?”

“What… what 'strip naked'!? Who'd do that sort of thing!?”

“Oh? Or are you planning to cosplay in any costume to show your gratitude? What a sacrifice!”

“Shut your mouth! It’s because of your misguidance that this situation became so complicated!”

Kamijou was uninvolved in this as he saw the two bickering (to him, they were bickering rather happily). At this moment, Kamijou thought of a ridiculous thing.

…She’ll wear anything to show her gratitude?

No… no way! Kanzaki looks really serious! I can’t joke around in this situation! Stop thinking about Kanzaki as an onee-san wearing that cute swimsuit that Index wore at the seaside! Hurry up and get rid of this idea!

“…Are you okay? Why do I feel a strong aura from you?”

“It’s nothing! As a man, I definitely won’t buy that kind of book! I, Kamijou Touma, am not intending to stoop so low!”

“What?”

Kanzaki was confused, tilting her head over, wondering how to answer. Tsuchimikado, however, gave a cynical smile, saying,

“Hohoho! Say it, what’s your wish? Resting on Nee-chin’s legs? Let motherly Nee-chin clean your ear for you? Or do you want Nee-chin to make a bento that’s completely different from her character?”

“Don’t say any more! It’s not a casual talk between men right now! Don’t say

what I like in front of girls!”

“Tsuchimikado, although I’m not sure what’s going on, you staying here may cause the patient’s condition to worsen. Can you please leave?”

“Ah, you want to be alone with him? What do you want to do? Don’t tell me it’s…!”

Tsuchimikado’s eyes glowed.

“Nee-chin wants to shape an apple into the shape of a rabbit, and gently feed it to Kami-yan? Sorry, I didn’t notice it, how slow of me!”

“It’s not! I beg you, stop making random guesses and make yourself feel ashamed!”

“Ah, or are you going to feed him with your mouth? However, although it’s nice thinking about it, it’s disgusting when one actually does it.”

“That’s enough; stop saying any more! Hurry up and disappear!”

Wonder what expression Tatemiya Saiji will give when he hears this? After creating quite a ruckus in the hospital room, Tsuchimikado ran out of the room, laughing.

In an instant, the hospital room in the morning became extremely silent.

Kanzaki was gasping due to anger. Seeing her from behind, Kamijou was trembling throughout, thinking, *Oh, Tsuchimikado, Tsuchimikado, maybe you intended to lighten the mood by saying those words, but must you run away after saying all that?*

“Ar… that… Kanzaki-san? Can I say something?”

“…Why the honorifics all of the sudden?”

“That gratitude or thanks… is only a joke by Tsuchimikado, right?”

Kamijou was afraid of being scolded furiously by Kanzaki like what happened to Tsuchimikado, feeling really tense. But Kanzaki stammered,

“But… I have no other choice… Protecting ordinary civilians like you should be our responsibility… but we ended up letting you get hurt. I understand that this isn’t a problem that can be settled with just one deep bow. So…”

Kanzaki got more upset the more she spoke, and her voice became even softer and softer. She again used her fingers to play with her bangs. Maybe this was an action she was used to doing when she was frustrated. Then, it seemed like she finally couldn't take it, as she roughly grabbed her hair and sighed. Kamijou thought that this action was like an author with writer’s block crushing up a script and throwing it into the dustbin; there was something similar between each action.

To Kamijou, anyone who was still bothered by the situation even after it was over, like Kanzaki, was a headache to him. If it was the irresponsible Tsuchimikado, he’d likely say, “Sorry to bother you, bye.” Kamijou really preferred this simple feeling. Too bad Kanzaki’s sense of morality was too strong, so she couldn’t do that.

At his wits' end now, Kamijou sighed heavily.

It seemed like he had to be more serious.

“So this is what your ‘point’ is?”

“Yes, I’m the type that will easily cause other people trouble- especially you, who carried quite a burden several times because of me. I feel guilty every time. Besides, it’s not just me this time, but the entire Amakusa sect that caused you a problem.”

“Ohhh… but, why do you have to bother so much? Besides, the problem between ‘us’ is settled, and there’s no one injured.”

Hearing that, Kanzaki was startled.

She blinked her eyes, and asked,

“The ‘us’ you’re talking about is…?”

“Um? That’s me and the Amakusa. Ah, and the Anglicans. Including Orsola, Index and Stiyl, and you- everyone that’s involved.”

“…”

Kanzaki was stunned.

It was like a difficult question that seemed impossible to solve being solved in front of her by someone.

“Do you have to be so surprised? Whether it be Britain, Rome, or any problem, the way I, as an outsider, see it, there’s nothing different. To me, who’s a stupid and ignorant child, a group doesn’t mean anything.”

In contrast, without any hesitation, Kamijou continued on with fervor and assurance.

It was as if he thought that the question was so simple that there was no need to think about it.

“I’m not helping Index for the sake of the Anglican Church, but rather helping the Anglican Church because of Index.”

At that moment, one could hear someone running in the corridor.

Kamijou thought that it might be Index.

As if he was announcing his own stand, he continued,

“Next time, if Agnese asks me for help, I should help her. She was coincidentally the bad guy this time. But being a bad guy once doesn’t mean she’ll be a bad guy forever.”

Kamijou stopped, smiling.

Kanzaki gave a surprised expression, and revealed a smile of helplessness.

Maybe Kamijou Touma’s idea of doing things was too simple, too stupid.

But because of it, he would never be at a loss.

Ever.

There was no rainy season or dry season in England, as the weather was unpredictable throughout the year. In England, the weather would change every four hours; it was common knowledge. Even if there was good weather at the moment, many pedestrians would be carrying their umbrellas along.

It had been raining in London since evening. But the citizens wouldn’t cancel their outdoor plans because of the rain. Many different colored umbrellas were squeezed together on the narrow street.

Stiyl Magnus and Laura Stuart were walking side by side through the drizzle that was like a wet fog. Stiyl was holding a black umbrella that was like a bat, while Laura was holding a beautiful white umbrella laced with gold lines on top that was like a cup of red tea.

“If you’re just going back to Lambeth Palace, why don’t you just call a chauffeur to fetch you?”

“Those who hate rain shouldn’t stay in this city.”

The umbrella that Laura was happily spinning about said this. It was obviously prejudice. Someone like Stiyl wouldn’t like this fog-like drizzle. Even if he raised the umbrella, his clothes would be wet, and there would even be moisture in his cigarette; there was no benefit at all.

Stiyl looked at the tip of the cigarette that was unable to light up, and sighed.

Right now, Laura was walking on her way home. Stiyl had just caught up with her, intending to use this opportunity to give a final report. The Archbishop of the Anglican Church that was in front of him seemed to enjoy her freedom a lot, as the times to go to and leave the Cathedral were rather flexible. She didn’t like to stay in the same spot, so even mission reports or tactical meetings were normally held while she was walking.

For Stiyl, he had to prevent the enemy from attacking or eavesdropping every time Laura was walking on the road, and it was a truly tiring thing. Like this time, the two umbrellas that they were holding were specially modified such that they had the capabilities of telephone booths. The voices of the two could be transmitted through the vibrations of the umbrellas, and those "voices" wouldn’t get outside the "areas" the umbrellas covered.

“—So basically, this is how this mission went. The Roman Catholic Church seems to have treated this as an act conducted by Agnese Sanctis and 250 militants. The Roman Catholic Church is declaring that the group did this independently, and that they have no intention of assassinating Orsola.”

“Don’t they have to take responsibility for not managing their own people well?”

Laura bitterly laughed as she used her fingers to play with her hair. Her silky hair gave off a sense of solemn beauty, and once it got wet, it would give off a sense of sensual beauty like spider silk.

Stiyl glanced at Laura from beside her, saying,

“…Is there a need to do this?”

“Hoho, are you referring to me accepting Orsola Aquinas and the Amakusas as formal members of the Anglican Church? Are you very uneasy with this decision, Stiyl?”

“Since the Roman Catholic Church has formally declared that they ‘don’t intend to kill or hurt Orsola or anyone involved’, even if they weren't protected by us, the Roman Catholic Church probably wouldn’t dare to take action against them. With the current situation, if they die an unnatural death, it’ll cause a serious problem on a global scale.”

“But what if they die of very natural causes?”

Laura gave a barbaric smile that was like a pirate's. The huge difference between her appearance and her expression dumbfounded Stiyl.

“Thinking about it now, you seem to have already understood the Roman Catholic Church's true intentions. If so, why didn’t you order me to save Orsola Aquinas from the Roman Catholic Church? Why did I have to do it in such a roundabout way?”

“I don’t understand it completely. Even I didn’t expect Orsola’s method to be wrong.”

Laura paused for a while, and continued,

“However, that isn’t important.”

Stiyl turned to look at Laura.

Laura spun her pure-white umbrella, and said,

“Let’s think of this scenario, Stiyl. If we had failed to save Orsola in this situation, would there be any change? Once she returned to the Roman Catholic Church, she would still have been executed in the end. No matter whether we succeeded in saving her, The Book of the Law would never have been decoded.”

Laura made her conclusion,

“So, it’s the same whether we saved her or not.”

Orsola’s fate was but a trivial thing.

Stiyl sighed slightly, and said,

“If this is the case, then why did the Archbishop order me to hand the cross over to Orsola? The original situation is distressing enough, yet you added on to my workload. Although you’re not going to admit it, you planned on rescuing Orsola from the beginning, right?”

“Uuu…”

“It’s somewhat weird that there’s too few reinforcements. Maybe you had already gathered most of the members of Necessarius on standby near the Sea of Japan, so you had no manpower to give me? If Agnese and her group had brought Orsola back to Rome by ship, the people waiting on the surface of the water would use something related to the ‘cross’ as an excuse to launch an attack. Is there anything embarrassing about this that's making you refuse to admit it? I really don’t understand you.”

“Mm mm! No such thing! No such thing! I interfered with this only for the sake of the Anglican Church’s benefit!”

Laura was so embarrassed that her face was about to puff out smoke as she frantically tried to deny it. Stiyl didn’t bother arguing back. Shouting alone made Laura even more embarrassed, and now her face was flushed red.

“Alright, then, what is this benefit that you’re talking about?”

“…You’re convinced by me that easily? It’s Kanzaki Kaori.”

Laura twisted her mouth,

“After this incident, I believe you found out that Kanzaki has a lot of power, and her sense of morality is too strong, so it would be easy for her to take an arbitrary action. Although there’s no mishap, the situation is still perilous. There’s a need to add a chain on her for the sake of everyone’s safety.”

Stiyl’s cynical smile disappeared.

Laura’s face unknowingly became serious as well.

“We can’t use violence to stop her actions- no, we still can stop her, but a heavy price would have to be paid. I believe you've seen the report about what happened to those stupid Knights at the coastline of Japan.”

Stiyl remembered the reports of the other groups.

Twenty-one full-armored Knights had planned on their own to attack the Amakusa members, but had been attacked by someone unknown such that they were currently unable to battle.

“So, we need something other than a violent method to chain her down. In this situation, the ‘solder’ between her and the Amakusa will be useful. Also, we don’t need a detrimental shackle like ‘We’ll kill them if you don’t obey us,’ but rather a positive one like ‘We’ll protect them from the Roman Catholic Church if you obey us.’ If we force the Amakusa to do something that’s not beneficial to them, Kanzaki will definitely resist; if the things we do are beneficial to the Amakusa, she won’t resist at all. So, how isn’t this a huge benefit?”

Now that she finished, Laura revealed a radiant smile, yet Stiyl’s heart felt chilly.

Laura Stuart. Though she looked like a naïve girl at first glance, she was still the leader of the Anglican Church, and even the cold-hearted manager who had set up the lie around Index.

She was the one who had set up the rule that "there was to be a memory wipe

every year".

She was the one who had forced Index to be protected by the Anglican Church at all times, or she wouldn’t live.

She was the one who had lied that this was the good deed of the Church in order to prevent Index from rebelling.

She was the one who had even told Stiyl and others that Index would die if that wasn’t done, making them unable to disobey it.

No one was better than her at manipulating human feelings, rationality, interests, ethics, and "necessary values". Stiyl couldn’t help but reinforce his guard against this girl. The problem was that Stiyl was unable to do anything. If Stiyl took any rash action, Laura would punish Index without hesitation and not Stiyl; she was this kind of person.

Dong! Stiyl’s shoulder hit a pedestrian.

It seemed to be a student barely squeezing in between Stiyl and Laura.

Stiyl turned around, only to find that Laura had disappeared!

The telecommunication magic linking the two umbrellas was removed.

Stiyl frantically looked around before he finally noticed that far away, there was a white umbrella laced with gold like a teacup that was spinning around.

He had no idea how she did this.

Thinking about it, the white umbrella was lost within the crowd.

“…”

Stiyl, who was completely manipulated, couldn’t help but swallow his saliva.

The hidden dragon among magicians, she had somehow been able to get to the top, and it hadn't been done cheaply.

Stiyl’s back again felt chilly.

At the same time, however, a question popped up inside Stiyl.

The reason that the Amakusa had been saved was to control Kanzaki Kaori.

He could understand that.

So what was the reason in saving Orsola Aquinas?

He really couldn't understand.

Since the method of decoding The Book of the Law that Orsola had found was wrong, why had they accepted her as a member of the Anglican Church? Even if they saved Orsola, there was no way they could control someone like Kanzaki. Although Orsola's track record in evangelizing was rather impressive, such that her name was even eligible to be that of the new church, she didn't have any charisma, and was unable to lead a group or organization like Kanzaki could. If Orsola had charisma, the Roman Catholic Church wouldn't have dared to plot against her, for such an action would have brought about violence or even riots!

"…That sly woman."

Stiyl Magnus smacked his lips reluctantly.

If he could think of the real benefit of saving Orsola Aquinas, Stiyl would think of Laura as a bad person. But this was where Laura was most brilliant. The basis of judging whether she was good or evil was too small- rather, she did as many good things as she did evil things. On the balance of good and evil, she was keeping an intricate balance.

The balance continued on without falling to either side, so of course it was impossible to tell whether she was good or evil even if there were lead weights on both sides.

Stiyl was unable to make a decision, and could only continue to work for the Anglican Church.

Maybe that was her motive.

The rune magician thought as he disappeared into the smoky street.

Afterword

To the studious readers who read seven volumes in one go without feeling painful, nice to meet you.

To the readers who continued to buy the books ever since the first volume was released, it's been quite a while.

I'm Kamachi Kazuma.

Writing these books one at a time, I've unknowingly written seven books. The day this volume is released is the 8th of September and time continues to move so slowly. Most of the battles in this work were mostly one-on-one fights, so this time, there's group interaction involved.

The key word related to magic here is 'grimoire'. Since the female lead of this work has the responsibility of being the 'magical library', it seems that I should have added more to this idea. Anyway, the term 'grimoire' comes up quite a lot in this volume.

Besides that, I tried to emphasize many characteristics of various groups. If I can induce your imagination and you're able to think of numerous powerful moves that several groups use and the thoughts and culture behind them, I'll be very honored.

I'll like to thank these two people: Haimura-san, who is in charge of illustrations, and Miki-san, who's in charge of printing. I'll leave myself, who hasn't made any self-improvement, in your hands.

I'll also like to thank the readers who bought these books. Although I've been going around the same spot without improving at all, I'll continue to struggle and roll on the road to improvement from now on. I hope that everyone will continue to show me some compassion.

Then now, let me be thankful that this work is able to last all the way to the

seventh volume.

And I look forward to continuing on with this work.

At this moment, let me sign off first.

Once the story revolves around magic, Mikoto and Komoe-sensei have no involvement at all!

-Kamachi Kazuma

Notes

1. ↑ In the original text, the author purposely uses something that sounds like old Japanese for Laura’s dialogue.
2. ↑ The curriculum in Japan for primary and secondary school education has three semesters. A school year starts in April, and the second semester starts in September, after summer vacation.
3. ↑ Francisco de Jaso y Azpilicueta was the first Christian missionary to preach to the Japanese.
4. ↑ **Kanji:** Iron Mace Knight Squadron
5. ↑ **Kanji:** Both Axe Knight Squadron
6. ↑ **Kanji:** Futility System
7. ↑ **Kanji:** Sleep Disturbance System
8. ↑ Sometimes referred to as **Idolatry Theory**, as in Volume 4.
9. ↑ When there was a wave of persecution against Christians during the Edo period, Stepping on Fumie was a method used to check whether people were Christians. The idea was that people would draw a picture of Jesus Christ or Saint Mary on a piece of paper, put it on the floor, and force others to step on it; those who didn’t dare do so would be identified as Christians.
10. ↑ Siebold was a German doctor and biologist who came to Japan during the Edo period.
11. ↑ During the Edo period, the Dutch were the ones who taught the Japanese all sorts of Western knowledge.
12. ↑ They refer to the Western ships that came to Japan during the Bakumatsu era
13. ↑ In Volume 4, the resort owner had Stiyl's appearance, contrary to the anime, where Kanzaki had it instead. The anime made a few other switches, too.
14. ↑ **Kanji:** Anti-Christian Black Magic
15. ↑ **Kanji:** Voice of the Demon Killer

Toaru Majutsu no Index — Volume 07

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